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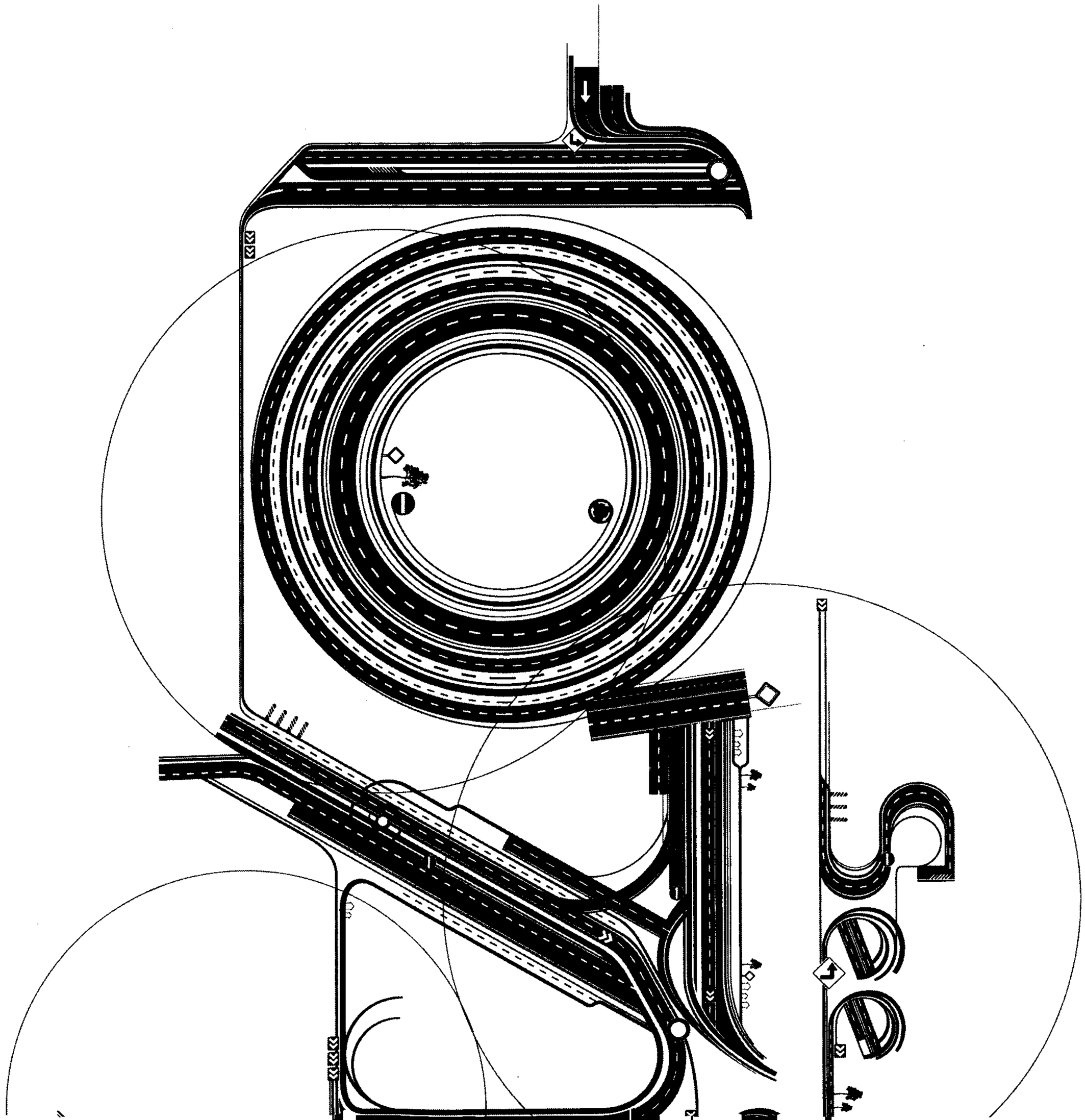
† 107 miles example is based on the new Audi A6 Saloon 2.0 TDIe SE Manual. The fuel efficiency improvements are calculated using official combined mpg figures compared to the equivalent outgoing model. In this example the aforementioned new A6 has been compared to the A6 2.0 TDI model. Fuel consumption can vary with individual driving style. For more details of the improvements in each model please visit audi.co.uk Official fuel consumption figures for the A6 range in mpg (l/100km): from Urban 15.3-40.4 (18.5-7.0), Extra Urban 31.0-65.7 (9.1-4.3), Combined 22.4-53.3 (12.6-5.3). CO_2 emissions from 139-299 g/km.



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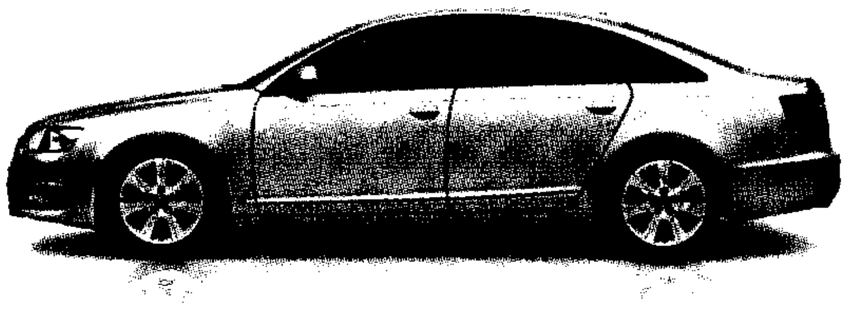

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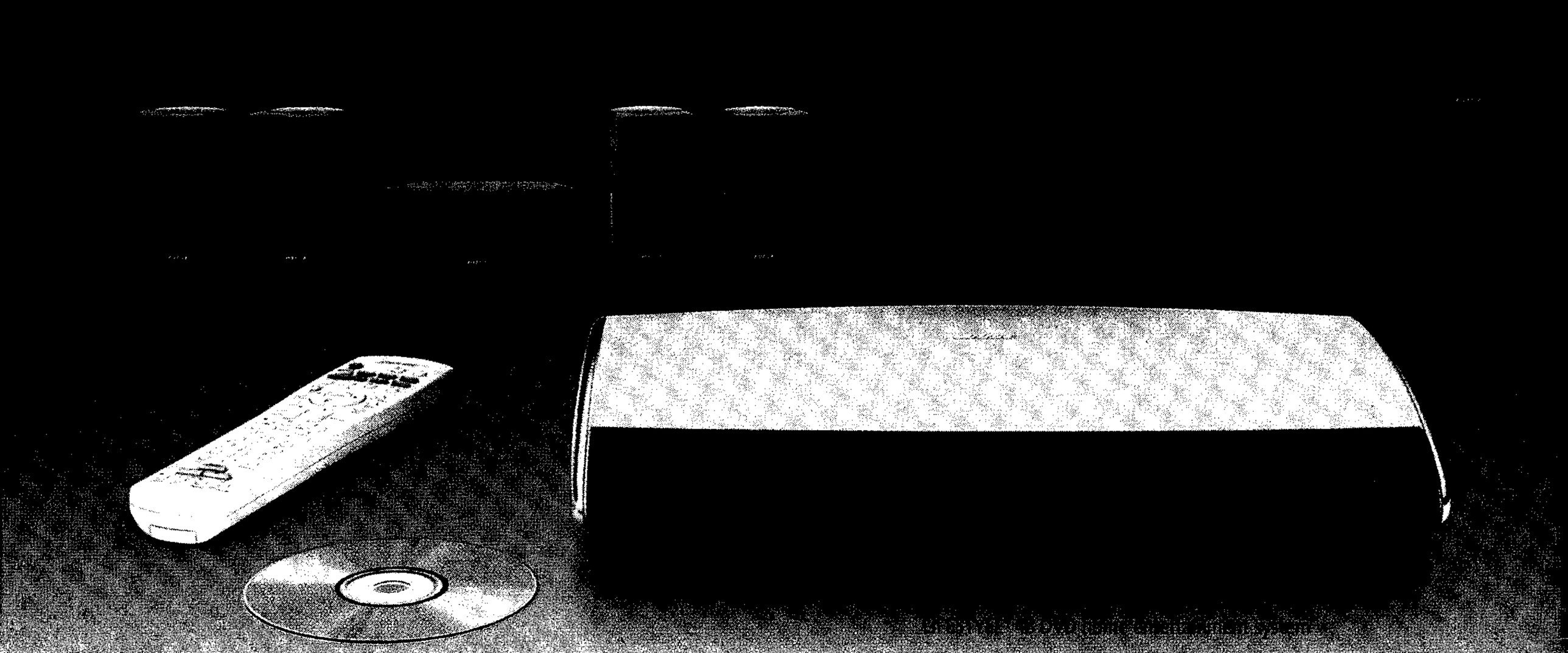

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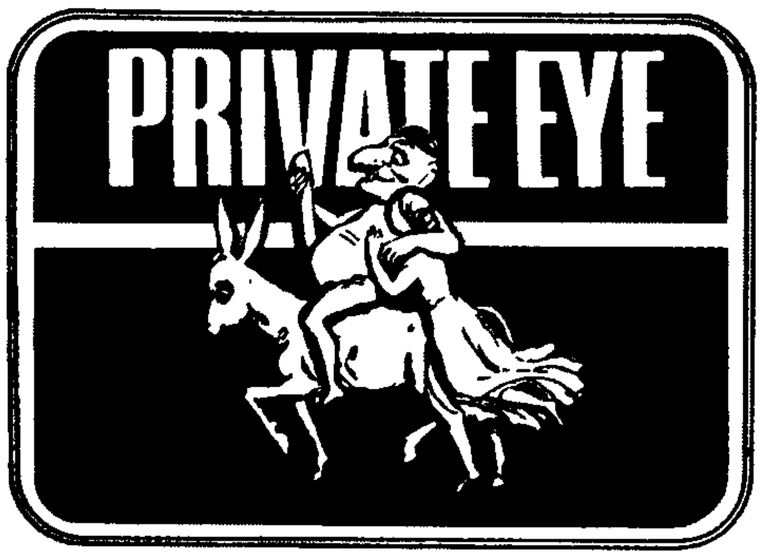

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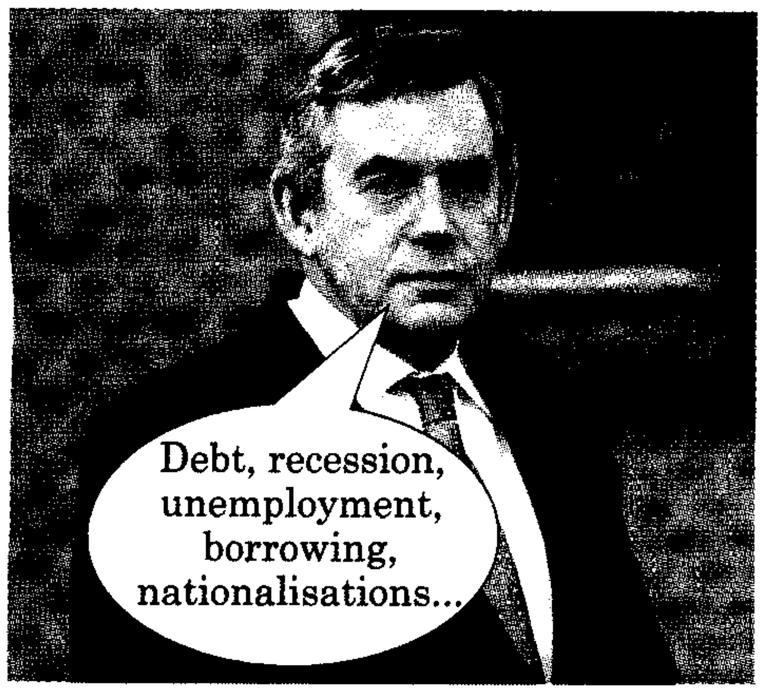

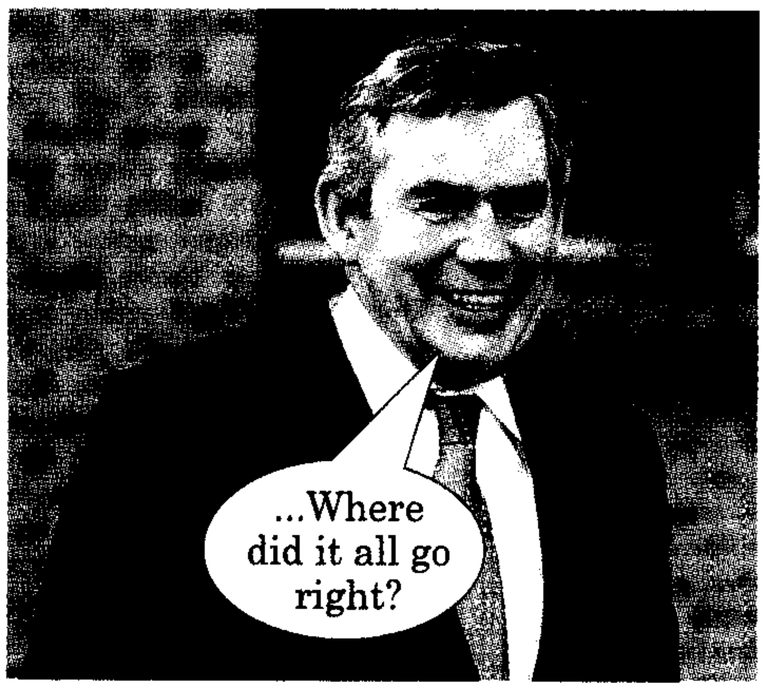

NUMBER CRUNCHING

£120bn Expected level of government debt in UK next year

£220bn Current level of personal debt on loans and credit cards in UK

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ABC

EYE TOLD YOU SO

"AS THE old rules retire, expect plenty of guff about how they have served the economy well but now's time for a change."

So said the *Eye* four months ago (1215) when it appeared that chancellor Alistair Darling would ditch Gordon Brown's cherished golden rule (that the books would balance over the economic cycle) along with the sustainable investment rule (that government debt wouldn't exceed 40 percent of national income).

Darling duly confirmed the inevitable on Monday. The rules would indeed be ditched, with the amenable National Audit Office certifying that the economic cycle started and ended at precisely the time required to, er, ensure they hadn't been broken.

And guff there was aplenty too. "The framework provided an effective constraint on government policy," reported the Treasury, as budget deficits lurch to their highest ever levels just as the economy nose-dives.

Apparently it also delivered "transparency in the operation of fiscal policy". Really? This was the fiscal framework that forced record levels of investment into an off-balance sheet netherworld of the private finance initiative for no better reason than ensuring government debt didn't inch over 40 percent. Now it's set to hit 60 percent, even on the government's rosy projections. In the meantime, the PFI industry has so hijacked public investment in schools and hospitals that the over-priced scheme can't be escaped even when its off-balance sheet allure has well and truly vanished.

● *See Planet PFI*, p30

CHANCELLOR Alistair Darling says he's determined to stick the broken model of British financial services back together again, yet he's entrusting the job to the very people who bust it in the first place.

Persisting with his predecessor's 2006 plan to "develop and support a new strategy to promote London as the leading international financial centre", Darling has set up a group to improve the lot of the insurance and asset mananegment companies (there doesn't appear to be one for their victims).

Running the "insurance industry working group" will be Andrew Moss, chief executive of Norwich Union owner Aviva, which is still at war with its policyholders over attempts to take "orphan assets" for the benefit of shareholders and partly to pay endowment mis-selling fines.

The asset management group includes Martin Gilbert, long-time boss of Aberdeen Asset Management, whose firm was at the centre of the "split capital" trust mis-selling scandal that cost investors £600m and his firm around £50m in compensation.

Just the men to address the "irresponsibility" of the City that Gordon Brown has recently lambasted.

THE buy-to-let bubble was bound to burst – the only question was how.

First, the biggest lender to landlords, Bradford & Bingley, collapsed and was nationalised at the end of September. Last week surveyors reported record falls in rents and in the number of new rental properties coming on to the market.

Then the Council of Mortgage Lenders published figures showing that buy-to-let arrears are higher than in the mortgage market as a whole for the first time ever, after a 50 percent increase between the second and third quarters.

The one crumb of comfort for landlords – and tenants, as they are the ones who will actually lose their homes – appeared to be that the percentage being repossessed was no higher.

Except for one thing: buy-to-let landlords are on commercial mortgages that give lenders the option to apply to the courts to appoint a "receiver of rent", who collects rent on their behalf and if necessary sells the property to repay the loan. The number of buy-to-let mortgages three months in arrears with a newly appointed receiver of rent *quintupled* between the second and third quarters. The total number with a receiver is now 1,475 – that's on top of the 2,496 in conventional repossession.

● *Housing special*, p8

ANY DAY now the government will announce whether it backs the proposal for a third runway at Heathrow.

The answer is almost certainly yes, given that Gordon Brown and transport secretary Geoff "Buff" Hoon have already expressed their support for the expansion, even though it will mean an extra 220,000 flights a year and a huge increase in noise and pollution – which sits a little oddly with the official target of reducing UK carbon emissions by 80 percent.

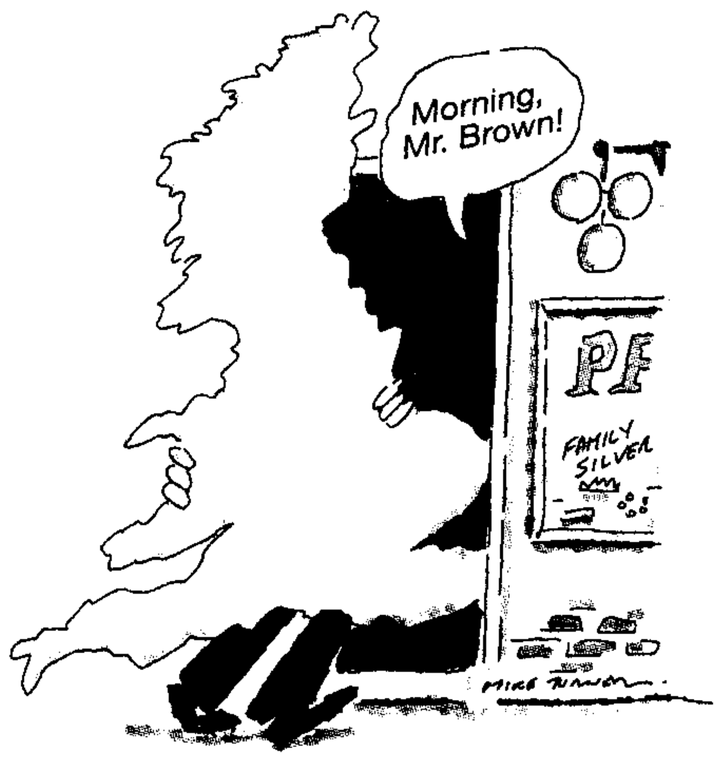
Will parliament be permitted to vote on a decision of such magnitude? Not if Brown and Hoon can help it: Labour whips have warned them that the plan would be defeated in the Commons. The Tories and Lib Dems are against it, and dozens of Labour backbenchers would oppose it as well.

The level of hostility was glaringly apparent in a debate on 11 November, when scarcely anyone other than "Buff" Hoon had a good word to say for the proposal. The Labour MP Martin Salter asked for a simple undertaking that "there will be no expansion of Heathrow airport and no third runway without a vote in this House". The minister refused.

"There will be a vote," thundered Bob Marshall-Andrews MP. "This place is not so enfeebled or lacking in creativity that we cannot find the means to have a vote, and we will have it. I say to the secretary of state that when that vote comes, the government will lose it." As the shadow transport secretary Theresa Villiers observed: "I do not think that I have ever seen a secretary of state more isolated in a debate."

Still, presumably Hoon can expect BAA, which is pushing the scheme, to agree that it should be forced through by ministerial diktat without endorsement by the House of Commons. Or can he? When BAA's new chief executive Colin Matthews visited Westminster last week for a private meeting with MPs, even he seemed somewhat embarrassed by Hoon's attitude. Asked by John Grogan MP if the Commons should have a vote, Matthews replied: "I think the democratic process should run its course" – leaving the wretched Hoon more isolated than ever.

● City expansion, p13; Fantasy airport, p28



NEWS

AFTER years of "light touch" regulatory failure, the vultures are circling the carcasses of the financial crisis.

First to swoop, oddly enough, is the man who was supposed to be combating such tactics when he ran the supine Financial Services Authority for four years from 2003, John Tiner. He has teamed up with vulture capitalist Clive Cowdery to launch a new business called Resolution. Cowdery only recently sold a previous company (also called Resolution), which he used to buy up closed "zombie" life insurance funds (*Eyes passim*). He has been reported to have earned around £160m personally from the venture, while policy-holders saw what Labour MP Paul Flynn called "atrociously poor returns".

The latest incarnation of Resolution will buy up troubled financial service companies and sell them on within "two to four years", making "mid-teens percentage gross internal rates of return". Not much of the cash will find its way into the government's coffers, though, thanks to the Guernsey-registered firm's elaborate tax-avoiding structure.

Although this is the sort of tail-wagging-dog financial engineering that got financial services into such a state in the first place, it has quickly secured the approval of Tiner's old mates at the FSA. The Revenue isn't likely to probe the tax arrangement in too much detail, either. One of the UK-based directors, Phil Hodkinson, is a non-executive adviser to the HM Revenue & Customs board.

MORE evidence of staggering ineptitude in handling sensitive personal data, this time at the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

Eye reader Mark White was having a frustrating time trying to sort out his disability benefits. The DWP's computers kept insisting he was suffering from ME, when in fact he has chronic arthritis and spinal injuries; and they also failed to correctly record a change of address, causing Mr White's income support payments to suddenly stop.

In an effort to track down the problem, Mr White made a request under the data protection act to see what information the DWP holds on him. Several weeks later, an envelope arrived by recorded delivery... containing personal data about someone else. The covering letter was addressed to Mr White, but the documents sent from his records were incomplete and tucked in with them was the print-out of an email regarding another claimant, including the man's name, national insurance number and birth year.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

£150,000 Earning threshold at which government is to introduce new 45 percent tax rate

£141,866 Annual salary of cabinet ministers

Street of Shame

WHO'd have guessed that the *Times* felt so passionately about a French government proposal for pan-European regulation of national football leagues?

The topic has hardly rated a mention in the sports pages, but an editorial in last Saturday's paper suddenly let rip: "This is an alarming development and ministers must stop its progress now before it is too late." The structure of football, it insisted, is different in every country and should stay that way.

Nowhere, alas, did the Thunderer find room to mention the most compelling reason for opposing Sarkozy's scheme. The Dirty Digger has a near-monopoly when it comes to lucrative satellite TV coverage of both the English and Italian football leagues, and he certainly doesn't want to see those carefully negotiated deals destabilised by EU interference. No doubt that brilliant Brussels networker Lord Mandelson, business minister and Corfu holiday companion of the Murdochs, has already got the message...

POLLY Toynbee rushed to defend social workers from the "frenzy of media hate" unleashed by the tabloids over Baby P. "The fury stirred up by the *Sun* verges on lynch mob incitement," she wrote in last week's *Guardian*.

Noting that the hysteria had "reached a newly demented pitch", she lamented that in child protection services "one case blasted out of all proportion can undo years of good". How true.

Alas, in the online version, Toynbee's anti-tabloid screed had a list of "related articles" next to it, including newspaper stories from February and April reporting Jersey police's claims that human remains were found under a concrete floor at Haut de la Garenne.

Whoops! Forensic tests have revealed that the "child's skull" police found was probably a piece of wood or coconut shell, while Jersey police confirmed on 12 November that there is no evidence of any children being murdered.

And where had those non-hysterical "related articles" appeared earlier in the year? In the *Guardian*.

THIRSTY *Telegraph* editor Will Lewis takes great exception to the idea that he has dumbed down his newspaper. So how did the *Telegraph* website preview Alistair Darling's pre-Budget report?

"Is there a celebrity you would rather see at the dispatch box?" it asked readers. "Could *Strictly Come Dancing* absconder John Sergeant be just the person to lift the nation's spirits? Or perhaps Jordan, the millionaire glamour model whose finances are somewhat healthier than the government's. Or is the ideal choice for times when the government coffers are bare someone who has made a fortune without an ounce of talent at her disposal? Step forward and accept the red briefcase, Paris Hilton... Let us know below who you think the ideal 'safe pair of hands' for the economy would be."

Coming soon – the *Eye* reader quiz. Which celebrity would you rather see edit the *Daily Telegraph*?

TRINITY Mirror chief executive Sly Bailey was delighted by the BBC Trust's rejection of plans by the corporation to launch "BBC Local", a series of web-TV channels providing local news around the country.

"We can now continue to invest without the fear that a publicly-funded giant would be duplicating already existing services," she frothed.

Presumably that will mean more investments like last week's closing of 44 regional titles, 40 offices, a print plant and the sacking of 1,200 staff. Former Trinity Mirror workers who would have been ideal candidates for the 400 jobs BBC Local would have created are no doubt equally chuffed.

HER MAJESTY the Queen will visit Ravenswood, a residential community run by the Jewish charity Norwood, on 11 December. The glad tidings were announced last week by Norwood's president, Richard "Dirty" Desmond, and dutifully splashed all over the pages of his *Daily Star* and *Daily Express*. "Something that sets Norwood apart," he boasted, "is that we have the Queen as our royal patron."

Something else that sets Norwood apart is that it's the only royally-approved charity presided over by a former publisher of *Posh Wives* magazine. No doubt Des will give her a souvenir copy. He may also take the chance to tell her about his TVX satellite channels, which are marking the day of the royal visit by displaying their own philanthropic concerns – animal welfare (*Dogging Diaries*), holistic healing (*Fill That Crack*) and racial harmony (*Black Chicks on White Dicks*).

Perhaps wisely, Her Majesty will be wearing gloves when she shakes Dirty Des's hand.

LIONEL Barber, editor of the *Financial Times*, is raising eyebrows with his schmoozing of James "Little Jimmy" Murdoch, whose family owns the *FT*'s deadly rival, the *Wall Street Journal*.

Barber gave up part of his op-ed page on 17 November to let Little Jimmy gas on about how "Carbon disclosure should be mandatory by 2010" – not the most pressing question on *FT* readers' minds with the world economy in meltdown. At the same time Barber flew over media editor Andrew Edgecliffe-Johnson, who is based in New York, to cover Murdoch's speech at a trade conference in Monte Carlo – a curious decision considering the *FT* has a clutch of media reporters based far closer in London, not to mention a team of correspondents in France just a train ride away from Monte Carlo.

What could Barber be hoping for in return for this *arslikhan* of the Murdoch heir apparent?

"PICTURES of semi-naked women basically make the world a better place," fun-loving *Independent* editor Roger Alton declared last month. Alas, not all his readers agree: the latest ABC figures reveal that the *Indy* has seen an alarming drop in circulation since he took over.

Still, hacks know what the editor likes and nothing could appeal to Alton more than a scantily-clad Kate Moss. Last week the pictures desk did the necessary around a "news" story that a bed which Moss had slept in while renting a house in the Cotswolds was up for auction.

Although the *Indy* mentioned that bidding was expected to start at around £200, the smart money is on it being snapped up by a telephone bidder, a Mr R A, based in Canary Wharf, for around £5,000.

"If you can't stand Heat, get out of the kitchen!"

"We'll be broke by Boxing Day"

BACK on 16 October, *Sun* showbiz editor Gordon Smart – who has on more than one occasion been in the same room as Guy Ritchie, under strictly supervised conditions – unleashed his "inside view" of how the film director's divorce from Madonna was unfolding.

"There are worrying signs this one is shaping up to get dirty," he confided. "Today's revelations in another big *Sun* exclusive prove the battle lines are being drawn." It was to be "the biggest and nastiest celebrity divorce since Heather Mills and Sir Paul McCartney", the paper reiterated on 10 November.

And lo, it came to pass: 11 days later the couple were granted a decree nisi, with no dispute over either a financial settlement or custody. In the course of the six-minute hearing, it was revealed that they had been living apart for a full six months prior to the petition for divorce – throughout the period that Smart and his team had been telling *Sun* readers the couple were planning a renewal of their wedding vows (26 July), discussing a further adoption (13 August), devoting soppy speeches to one another at birthday parties (18 August) and viewing holiday properties together (30 August). Some inside view!

HOW is the *Eye*'s favourite columnist Liz Jones getting on in the country retreat she documented her move to so thoroughly back in December (see Hackwatch, *Eye* 1201)?

Well, she has adopted some chickens who had formerly been in a battery farm. In February this year she described the poor animals as "bald… covered in blood. Their beaks were misshapen. They were so weak they could barely stand, let alone walk or grasp a perch."

The good news is that a mere nine months later, after tortuous negotiations and the involvement of the Press Complaints Commission, Jones's paper the *Mail on Sunday* agreed to print a letter from the Battery Hen Welfare Trust which pointed out that "the ex-battery hens Liz Jones collected from us in January 2008 were generally in good condition, not 'covered in blood' nor 'almost pecked to death' as she wrote."

Founder Jane Howorth, who prides herself on her good relations with the farming industry and the fact her organisation will "never knowingly allow a hen to go to a new home with health problems", pointed out that "her sensationalist article only illustrated how shock tactics and negative spin achieve nothing – it directly damaged farm relations resulting in the loss of thousands of Ex-Bats, hens we could have homed."

RECESSIONS, according to Hamish McRae of the *Independent*, serve a useful purpose. "They force efficiency," he explained in his column last Wednesday. "They force our whole society to figure out simpler and more effective ways of doing things."

A great consolation to *Indie* hacks, no doubt, coming a mere 24 hours after the announcement that 60 of them – a quarter of the editorial staff – will be sacked in the new year.

TALKING DIRTY

MISSED out on tickets for next summer's Ashes series? Fear not: an equally thrilling contest starts at the high court in July, and admission is absolutely free. It's the trial of a libel action brought by Richard "Dirty" Desmond against Tom Bower, and a glimpse of what spectators can expect was provided by a preliminary hearing at the high court last Wednesday.

Bower is the author of *Rough Trader*, an account of the porn baron's life and adventures. Dirty Des can't sue over that, however, since it hasn't even been scheduled for publication. Instead, as we revealed last September (*Eye* 1194), he has seen fit to sue over a brief reference to him in Bower's biography of Conrad Black, which appeared in November 2006. Desmond is suing only Bower, not his publishers.

Desmond

In the autumn of 2002, Bower wrote, Desmond heard rumours of financial problems at Black's Hollinger company. Still smarting over his defeat by Black two years earlier, in a dispute about their jointly-owned printing works, he was only too happy for the *Express* to run a story reporting that Hollinger faced "its biggest crisis ever". Desperate to conceal the extent of his troubles, Black sued for libel, and Desmond eventually had to settle and publish an apology.

In August 2007, nine months after publication of his book, Bower received a letter from Desmond's solicitors threatening a libel action. Why the delay? They claimed that the damage caused to their client had "only just come to light". What damage? They didn't specify. But the gist of their case is that Bower portrays Dirty Des as a vindictive and interfering proprietor who instructed an editor to run a damaging piece about Conrad Black, regardless of whether it was true or false, purely because of a festering grudge. In truth, they maintained, he has always been a hands-off owner: "Mr Desmond does not and did not at the material time exercise editorial control over the *Express* newspaper."

The defence assembled a vast dossier intended to show that he jolly well does, and that he often uses the newspapers to do down his personal enemies and puff his friends. Desmond's lawyers applied to the high court last week to have some of these examples struck out of the defence pleadings.

"The particulars of justification run over 31 paragraphs," complained his barrister, Matthew Nicklin, "including his choice of models to appear in his magazines, Lulu getting favourable coverage, and the alleged bullying of staff. How is that possibly going to help any jury decide if it is true that Mr Desmond ordered his newspaper to launch an attack on Lord Black in revenge?"

If Bower's book was about Desmond rather than Black, Nicklin went on, these stories might be relevant; but in this case "it is simply unnecessary to embark on a roving allegation looking at Mr Desmond's conduct during the Beslan hostage crisis or his relations with David and Victoria Beckham". Nor could he see why the defence wished to mention Desmond's record as a pornographer: "Well, so what? What's that got to do with it?"

All that mattered was the run-in with milord Black. Nicklin accused the defence of alleging that Desmond "was using his position as editor [*sic*] of the *Express* to do people down". They had cited, as evidence of editorial interference, the *Express* boss telling his hacks to write positively about his friends Mohamed Fayed and Sir Philip Green. "But that's not doing down," Nicklin said. "That's promoting! Some might say it shows good commercial sense." What of the claim that he encouraged unpleasant coverage of Ulrika Jonsson after she sold serial rights in her memoirs to the *Mail*? "It's irrelevant to whether he ordered an attack on Lord Black."

To Ronald Thwaites QC, for Tom Bower, all this was highly relevant. Since readers of Bower's book could reasonably infer that Dirty Des uses the *Express* "as a vehicle to wreak vengeance against his enemies", it was impossible to "ring-fence" the specific story about Black from the broader question of routine, improper editorial interference. "Has Desmond done this sort of thing before? If he has his way, this is a question to which the jury will not get an answer."

Mr Justice Eady agreed with Nicklin that there was no broader implication: the story in Bower's book was "not capable of a general meaning". Lulu, Ulrike, Posh 'n' Becks and other luminaries were duly struck out of the defence pleadings, because they weren't relevant to the allegation about Black.

But much else survived the cull, including the famous meeting between *Telegraph* and *Express* executives in April 2004 which ended in a blizzard of expletives and a rousing rendition by Desmond and his colleagues of *Deutschland über Alles*. Eady is also allowing the defence to mention a memo sent by *Sunday Express* editor Michael Pilgrim in 2001, protesting about the pressure to run damaging stories about Conrad Black because of the printworks dispute, and the resignation later that year of David Hellier, editor of the *Sunday Express*'s media section, after the appearance of a two-page hatchet-job on Black in his pages. "I'm sickened by the continual interference of the proprietor in allegedly objective reporting," he said at the time.

All this and more will be put to Desmond in front of a jury. Ronald Thwaites QC, who will cross-examine on behalf of Bower, warned at last week's hearing that Dirty Des "will be walking on eggshells in the witness box… He has editorial skeletons in his cupboard and he can't keep it closed". We shall see. Let battle commence!

HOW JOURNALISM WORKS (ON THE MAIL ONLINE)

1. Purchase series of photographs of actor Peter Falk, best-known as Columbo in the long-running TV series.
2. Do not worry about your proprietor's solemn promise following the death of Princess Diana to "not in future purchase pictures taken by paparazzi" when handing cash to Mavrix Photo Inc, a "premier source for celebrity images" which boasts how its "hard-nosed determination to 'get that picture' has earned us universal respect in one of the most competitive areas of photography." After all, he gave up worrying about that years ago.
3. Worry neither that the 80-year-old Falk (two years older than that other "veteran actor", Andrew Sachs) is clearly distressed in the photographs and gesturing at photographers surrounding him in street to leave him alone.
4. Write instead in the accompanying piece that Falk's "erratic behaviour" and the fact he was "spotted waving his arms in the air and muttering to himself" raised "fears" in passers-by, and maintain this was why police were called to the scene.
5. Cut and paste the last eight paragraphs of your story directly from the Wikipedia entry on the actor.
6. Ensure the story is attributed to "Daily Mail Reporter" so no one knows this is what you do for a living, and can only blame the thuggish Martin Clarke, editorial director of Mail Online, when complaints from readers about lack of "respect" and "humane consideration" flood in.

HOUSING SPECIAL

IF THE government target to build 3m new affordable homes is to be met by 2020, there is no time to lose.

One area identified as ripe for development is the South West, where the government wants 200,000 new homes. Before work can start, of course, there are the small hurdles of consulting residents and working out which greenfield sites should be concreted over. The body charged with both jobs is the government office for the South West, which has now submitted its findings to communities secretary Hazel Blears for approval.

One might think identifying so many sites on which to build so many homes in such a short space of time would have been a lengthy task for which great care, experience and sensitivity would be required. But apparently not.

A freedom of information request has revealed that in just one day the panel (of three officials) visited by car the following towns in south Devon: Brixham, Chudleigh, Dawlish, Exeter, Exminster, Honiton, Kingskerswell, Newton Abbot, Paignton, Taunton, Teignmouth and Torquay. The dynamic trio then supposedly surveyed every potential site in Cornwall in just four days.

So hectic was the whistle-stop tour that the officials were unable to say how long they stayed in each area, what exactly the "consultation" consisted of... or whether they actually bothered to get out of their car.

What a brave new world beckons!

"THERE is a permafrost at the moment caused by the credit crunch and it's our job to jackhammer through it," says London mayor Boris Johnson of his plans to unfreeze the housing market. But close scrutiny suggests the only thing Johnson will be jackhammering is his own foot.

His strategy is to release land owned by public bodies such as Transport for London for development to reduce the cost of building. It will junk Ken Livingstone's Stalinist insistence that all new housing developments should be 50 percent affordable homes and rely instead on the boroughs to do their bit. And it will no longer insist that at least 70 percent of those affordable homes should be for rent to people who cannot afford to buy. Instead, more people will be encouraged into shared ownership (part rent, part buy) with a new programme aimed at couples earning up to £72,000 a year.

Boris has so far ignored objections that the largely Tory boroughs will do no such thing, that affordable rented homes are desperately needed and that his ownership plans could end up subsidising negative equity for the "lucky" buyers. But he still faces one other small problem. Housing associations built 21,400 homes for shared ownership last year, mostly in London and the South East. Some 45 percent of them – 9,655 – remain unsold and 3,677 of those have been empty for the past six months.

JUST FANCY THAT!

DRIVERS who challenge speeding fines should have to pay their legal costs even if they win. So says justice minister Lord Bach, likening people who hire lawyers in lower courts to "parents who pay for private education".

FACT: Lord Bach, aka Willy Bach, is a proud alumnus of Westminster School.

CALLED TO ORDURE

Talking turkey

THE word "bonkers" is not often heard in the chamber of the Commons but it was used twice – angrily – by Labour dissident Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock) when the government insisted on wasting yet more millions of pounds on some new Westminster committees. But for the feisty Mackinlay, the cost would have been even higher.

Westminster loves setting up talking shops. This time it was regional select committees which will allegedly monitor the billions spent by regional development agencies. Or will they? Might they simply be ignored because they are full of nonentities?

Commons leader Harriet Harman proposed the new committees as an "effective and visible improvement" in parliamentary scrutiny *("way of creating jobs for the boys", surely? Ed)*. Not that all the committee members will be parliamentarians. In a highly unusual move, local councillors will be allowed to sit on them. Trebles all round for the Rotten Boroughs brigade!

Nor will there be any need for members of a committee to have come from the area it scrutinises. For instance, Labour MPs from the north of England will be allowed to stuff the south-west committee (Labour having few MPs in the south-west). Mackinlay was outraged. "Have we no pride?" he roared. "I fought hard to get elected to this place. It was five general elections before I got elected." Councillors should not be given a parliamentary position unless they had been elected to the Commons, he argued.

On the matter of members being bussed in from other regions, Mackinlay said MPs who tried to scrutinise a region with which they had no connection would be "stark staring bonkers". As he put it: "Their electors will ask, 'what the devil are you doing focusing on that region and not ours?'"

Mackinlay also opposed the idea that the committees' chairmen should be paid extra dosh. The government had already said the committees would not have to meet very often. If so little work was involved, why the need for a circa £15,000 bonus for chairmen? "The idea is simply bonkers," said Mackinlay. The government front bench looked deeply unamused. Mackinlay said that 144 MPs were already on above-basic pay, thanks to holding some form of official job (this is known as the "payroll vote" because MPs with lucrative sinecures are less likely to rebel against the party line).

There was also the paradox that the House's deputy leader, Chris Bryant, was helping to put forward the proposal for chairmen's extra pay, even though he himself does his ministerial duties for no extra pay. "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his salary for his friends," said Mackinlay. "The growth of the payroll vote and the patronage that goes with it is very unhealthy."

Point of information: Bryant is privately wealthy. To Mackinlay's huge credit he forced a vote on the question of chairmen's pay and the government was defeated on that part of the proposal. Other Labour MPs voting against the government on this issue included Brian Iddon, John McDonnell, Gordon Prentice and Dennis Skinner.

John Gummer (Con, Suffolk Coastal) noted that almost every Labour MP in eastern England was already some form of government office-holder. These committees would simply provide cushy billets to reward-hungry lobby fodder from Labour heartlands in the north-east. Sir Nicholas Winterton (Con, Macclesfield) called the committees "an abortion", apologising for using such an unfortunate word.

Labour MPs who spoke in favour of the committees included Leicester South's Sir Peter Soulsby and Warwick's James Plaskitt. The latter, who recently lost a minor ministerial job, maybe fancied his chances of chairing one of the regional committees (he was speaking before Mackinlay torpedoed the idea of extra money for chairmen).

Soulsby made the laughably weak argument that it was essential for such committees to have in-built Labour majorities because that would make it all the more impressive if they criticised the government. Yeah, sure. As if that's going to happen!

No doubt Sir Peter will be in the Labour whips' thoughts when it comes to finding suitable names for the committee chairmanships – unpaid though they will now be.

'Gavel Basher'

REPORTING ABUSE

NORTHERN Ireland's only centre for the victims of rape and sexual violence was left nearly destitute after the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) axed its £65,000-a-year grant, accusing staff of "financial mismanagement".

But documents obtained under the freedom of information act shed an entirely new light on the department's actions – suggesting it was searching for a publicly acceptable excuse to stop funding the Belfast Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Centre.

In 2003 DHSSPS hired PA Consulting to evaluate the centre – and "determine whether and upon what basis funding should continue". The report made a number of criticisms of the centre, many of them inaccurate. But now it has emerged that the pisspoor report was the result of meddling by officials, and that the consultants had originally recommended that the department continue to fund the centre. Minutes of a meeting obtained under FOI show that officials instructed the consultants to "amend" the report and ditch the recommendation.

The centre has been told it should consider court action if funding was withdrawn because of the report. But, of course, it doesn't have the funds. The latest application for funding from the DHSSPS has just been rejected on the grounds that its current income makes its services "financially unviable". And whose fault is that?

"Number forty seven: Have yourself buried in a pauper's grave"

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

IRELAND will propose a "solution" at next month's EU summit to the inconvenient truth of its vote against the Lisbon Treaty. But in reality a decision has already been made: Ireland will vote again on Lisbon in October or November next year.

Of course it won't be an easy sell. The anti-treaty Libertas group in Ireland has formed a coherent opposition to what it considers "bullying" by Brussels. But in many ways the wind is now beginning to blow in favour of a yes vote second time round.

First, some cosmetic changes will be made, such as ensuring Ireland can keep its EU commissioner. Then information campaigns will be rolled out, so that voters "understand" the treaty, which apparently they didn't last time. More importantly, there is the recession. Now that its property bubble has burst, Ireland is expected to be hit hardest of all EU countries by the downturn. As French president Nicolas Sarkozy has said, if Ireland wants a helping hand, it must recognise the need for EU reform!

It's not as if Ireland hasn't re-voted before. As pro-Lisbon Irish lawmaker Proinsias de Rossa pointed out at a recent European parliament constitutional affairs committee meeting, Ireland waited 16 months before voting again on the Nice Treaty. Why should Lisbon be any different?

ELSEWHERE in the EU Eurocrats are finding it easier to blackmail countries into ratifying the Lisbon treaty – especially if they are like Croatia, have dodgy records and are desperate to climb aboard the EU gravy train.

Croatia, which is badly affected by organised crime and is waiting to join the EU, is effectively being blackmailed into signing the treaty when it becomes the union's 28th member state. As the Belgian daily *De Standaard* reported earlier this month: "If the Lisbon treaty has not been ratified by the end of 2009, it will be integrated into the accession treaty for Croatia." Hey presto!

Croatia's interior and justice ministers were recently arrested following the murder of a prominent lawyer's daughter; and two journalists, Ivo Pukanic and Niko Franjic of the leading Croatian daily, *Nacional*, were killed by car bombs in Zagreb. President Stipe Mesic admits that it is "the rule of law and safety of citizens versus criminals, terrorists and mafia"; but the European Commission says it trusts the Croatian authorities to bring the criminals to justice.

Critics, however, fear the EU will make the same mistake with Croatia as it did in allowing Romania and Bulgaria to join too soon. Corruption in the latter, for example, remains endemic and widespread. So widespread, in fact, that when the EU's anti-fraud body Olaf tried to find out where its millions had gone in Bulgaria, Olaf was itself investigated by the country's National Security Agency (DANS). DANS was purportedly set up to fight crime but now collects internet and phone records of MPs and journalists without court orders. Welcome aboard!

EU-phemisms
WE'VE BROUGHT E.U. RULES ON FRUIT INTO LINE WITH MEPs' ATTITUDES
E.U. DIRECTIVE
If they are a bit bent, we look the other way

DOWN in Strasbourg at the Council of Europe (CoE), meanwhile, the world's first international treaty on government openness is being thrashed out... behind closed doors.

The 47-member CoE, not to be confused with the EU, is busy finalising its convention on access to official documents. But with a vote due on 27 November, the decision-making process is still shrouded in secrecy.

The CoE's parliamentary assembly was highly critical of the draft treaty, which lacked key elements such as time limits for replying to requests for information or an independent body to handle complaints (as, for example, the information commissioner does in the UK).

The CoE's rapporteur group on the treaty met to discuss the CoE parliament's opinion on 12 November but refused to reveal its conclusions – even after the Spain-based campaign group Access Info submitted an information request to know who had attended the meeting and what the group had recommended to ministers.

HUTTON STEW

NEWS that the lightly armoured Snatch Land Rovers, blamed for the deaths of 38 soldiers, were still being used in war zones more than a year after the Ministry of Defence promised their withdrawal has angered relatives.

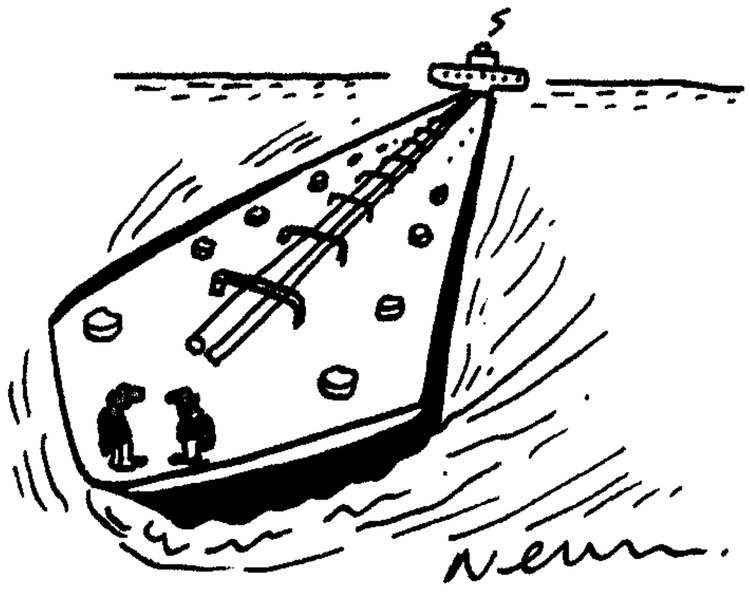
Sue Smith, the mother of Phillip Hewett, who died in Iraq in 2005 when a roadside bomb struck the Land Rover he was driving, last week instructed her lawyers to write to defence secretary John Hutton to renew demands for a public inquiry.

As Jocelyn Cockburn, Mrs Smith's solicitor, told Hutton, the inquest into her 21-year-old son's death was held jointly with that of two comrades, Lt Richard Shearer and Pte Leon Spicer, who died in the Snatch with him – and lasted barely three hours. Any attempts to explore the wider policy decisions involving the deployment of the Land Rover in the Al Amarah region, known to be high-risk and volatile, was swiftly stamped on by the coroner, who ruled it outside her remit.

Mrs Smith then launched a novel civil case against the MoD alleging negligence and a breach of her son's right to life under human rights legislation. The MoD usually falls back on a defence of crown immunity over those in war zones, but in May the high court ruled that the human rights act may indeed offer some legal redress to soldiers "wherever they may be".

While the US and other allies in Iraq and Afghanistan were well stocked up with the wide range of medium-weight fighting vehicles necessary for insurgent combat, such as Cougars, Vikings, Jackals and Mambas, the MoD was not. In fact it sold off 14 Mambas to a private military firm in Iraq in 2004 – the year before the death of Pte Hewett and his comrades – for £44,000.

Hutton signalled to the Commons defence committee last week, meanwhile, that he would be prepared to look "very seriously" at holding an inquiry into why Snatches are still in operation.



"We were hijacked a week ago and I've only just found out

GREEN GROW THE BIGOTS, O

ENVIRONMENTALISTS who read the leaked BNP membership list are in for a shock. Among the far rightists listed as collectors of "lurchers", "World War II militaria" and "medieval longbows" is one Keith Bessant, whom the BNP describes as a "former Green Party parliamentary candidate".

So he is. Bessant was one of the West Country's leading Greens, standing in Cheltenham in the 2001 and 2005 elections. A party spokesman said he had gone over to the BNP because its climate-change policy "was more radical", a statement which was strange for what it left out.

The Greens missed the opportunity to say that Bessant had turned from a lovable environmentalist into a bigot. But that may be because the bigotries of anti-semitism and homophobia are not exactly hanging offences in the party.

In June, police searching for a missing German woman, Natalie Bracht, arrested Tony Gosling, a Green candidate in Bristol, and his partner. They searched his home before releasing them without charge. Northumbria detectives said they were worried about Bracht's mental health and the safety of her five children after she covered their faces with headscarves and vanished from her Sunderland home. She has since turned up safe and well in Germany.

Gosling admitted to meeting Bracht briefly. She told him that Mossad was behind the 7/7 bombings, which had "nothing to do with Muslims", and added for good measure that South Gosforth Reformed Synagogue in Newcastle hid a "Masonic/Zionist cell".

She confided in the right man. Gosling said that although he could not confirm her story of a Jewish conspiracy in South Gosforth, it was important to bring her accusations to a wider audience.

Previously, Gosling had announced that he kept "an open mind" on whether the forged *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* that Hitler used to justify the Holocaust were indeed forged. "Many Jewish people believe *The Protocols of Zion* to be anti-Jewish hate material," he said. "In fact, their authenticity has never been entirely proven or disproven."

Gosling told the *Muslim News*, meanwhile, that the introduction of books about gay relationships into Bristol schools "personally disgusted" him. "It's the gay mafia in full swing."

Green conspiracy theories are used to explain not only the 7/7 Islamist attacks but also 9/11. Martin Deane, Green candidate in Hull, announced: "Having clocked up a few hundred hours now looking at evidence on the internet, I believe at the very least there is culpable US government complicity in the events of 9/11."

The Hull Green Party's website links to 9/11 "truth" reports that blame the attacks on the CIA and, of course, Mossad. Deane campaigned with fellow activist Justin Walker to get his party to demand a reinvestigation into the 9/11 attacks. The motion was defeated – but by the less than crushing margin of two votes.

Walker left the Greens when he went a conspiracy theory too far and embraced David Icke, the former sports presenter and green leader, who believes the world is controlled by giant lizards rather than Jews. The Green establishment might "demonise" Icke, Walker said in an open letter, but "closed minds, my friends, do not get to the truth!"

The gay rights group Outrage is demanding that the party cleans up its act, while Jewish Greens are so nervous that they have established a splinter group, Greens Engage.

Perhaps the gay and Jewish greens should not be too surprised by the crossover between the Green Party and the BNP. After all, the first European government to preach environmentalism was the government of Nazi Germany.

'Ratbiter'

TV

I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out Of Here! (ITV1)

IT WAS the moment light entertainment got heavy. Amid the clatter of camera shutters and the burble of discombobulated hacks, the man with the sad, pie-like face leant into the bouquet of microphones, cleared his throat, and delivered his address.

"It is time to go," announced John Sergeant, glumly.

Following eight weeks of fervent public support, biting critical disapproval and dancing that recalled the death throes of a drunken Russian bear, he'd had all he could stand and he could stand no more. Plonked in the eye of the hastily assembled press scrum, the former BBC chief political correspondent explained to the grieving nation why he'd packed his trunk and said goodbye to the *Strictly Come Dancing* circus. "There was a real danger I could win the show," he said. "Even for me that would be a joke too far."

Watching the ensuing flap – Paxman roaring delightedly in the front row, Mandelson polishing his pumps in the wings ("It would be nice to be asked to take part in the show," he whooped, hopefully), thousands of calls to the BBC demanding the head of somebody, anybody, immediately or else – it was clear the biggest joke was that a programme predicated on sequined waistcoats could have engendered such a firestorm of sanctimony and gloom.

While debate continues to rage – the shame of it all! The unfairness! The unsportsmanlike prizing of amusement above precision rhythm! The producers' decision to implement a new, joyless, "three strikes and you're out you bastards" policy! – ITV1 reminded us that the primary goal of a mainstream celebrity series should be – d'oh! – entertainment.

Thousands of miles from the *Strictly Come Sergeant* epicenter, **I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out Of Here!** continues to prove the least irksome contender on the pro-am celebrity indignity circuit, its fusion of chuckling self-awareness, jungle exhibitionism and blithe adolescent sadism the very definition of light entertainment.

Now into its eighth series, this year's Australian rainforest-set spectacle has provided viewers with a generous helping of prime-time pantomime. Thus far, we have seen Robert Kilroy-Silk (Baron Hardup) bicycle through a Perspex box of spiders before embracing an emotional Timmy Mallett (panto cow, rear end). We have seen Esther Rantzen (Fairy Godmother) show us her bra before swearing, in shorts, at a former member of Dollar. And we have seen Brian Paddick (Widow Twankey), admit that his favourite pop band is Blue, before gently soaping his ex-deputy assistant commissioning buttocks in the shower.

Dalek wasn't popular with the judges on 'Strictly Come Dancing' but the public loved him

Though the current line-up swivels on the now-traditional "loveable soap has-been/patently crackers ex-TV icon/orange women with breasts" reality axis, almost a third of this year's batch are homosexual, while seven of the initial 12 contestants are aged over 50. Although there is the suspicion that this was less a conscious decision to push the reality envelope and more a case of needs must – after all, when one's calls are repeated ignored by the cast of *The Bill*, where does one turn? – the move still represents an extraordinarily gamble for what is, in essence, a family-friendly variety show.

With viewing figures hovering around the 8m mark, it suggests the public is only too happy to watch 71-year-old ex-*Star Trek* actor George Takei rub insect repellent on to the bare bottom of former *Eastenders* star Joe Swash.

Perhaps more than any other reality series, *IACGMOOH* pays testament to the enlivening benefits of celebrity's much-mooted democratisation. Like love, fame see no colour. Or talent. Or, indeed, reason. Here, sporting legends rub naked shoulders with minor soap starlets, celebrity chefs bicker over pots of rice with disenfranchised ex-punk heroes and active politicians collect firewood with women whose sole claim to fame is that they once slept with a footballer. It's a bewildering mix but there's a certain harmony – even comfort – in the resulting higgledy-piggledy showbiz tableaux.

In the Australian jungle, it seems everyone's a winner. Wilting careers are revived, red-top villains are revealed as sub-tropical heroes, ITV1 chuckles with joy over its bulging coffers (although the lengthy disclaimers that now precede every request to utilise the phone voting system are wearing) and viewers get to watch Robert Kilroy-Silk's eyes water as he bites into a kangaroo's scrotum.

Where the *Strictly Come Sergeant* debacle has revealed that series as a priggish, self-righteous schoolmarm, *IACGMOOH* remains reality's class clown, snickering behind its sleeve as it devises ever more outrageous pranks and wheezes with which to upset teacher.

From the tip of its titular exclamation mark to the soles of its sturdy brown hiking boots, it is a reminder of how soon we forget about a celebrity's indiscretions, and how willing we are to allow him/her to carve out a new role for him/herself, however ignominious that role may be. And, call me an old-fashioned buffoon if you will, but I find that rather heartening.

With this in mind, we look forward to next year's series, in which, one evening around the campfire, John Sergeant reminisces tipsily about the madness that ensued back in the days when the public expected reality TV to abide by a set of boring, normal TV rules and actually – imagine! – behave itself.

'Doofer'

DUMB BRITAIN

Weakest Link, BBC1

Anne Robinson: What "V" is an adjective often used to describe the seventh-century Benedictine monk known as Bede?

Contestant: Victor.

AR: What was the surname of Rex and Noel, who had hits respectively with *If I Could Talk to the Animals* in 1967 and *Windmills of Your Mind* in 1968?

Contestant: Kissinger.

Century Radio Northeast, Lunchtime with Lisa Shaw

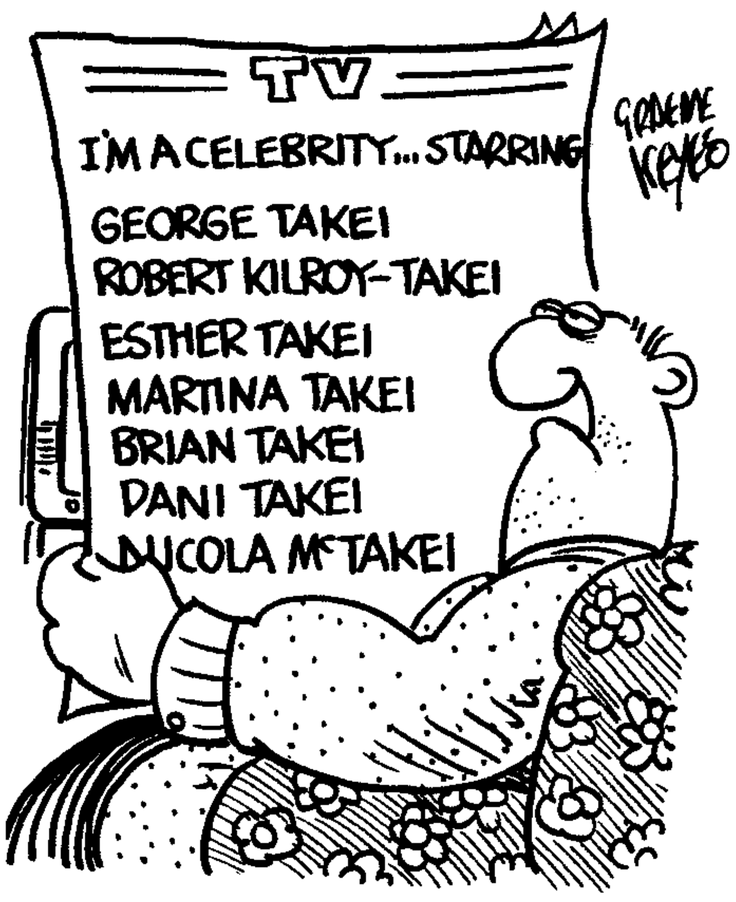
Lisa Shaw: In which book is Room 101 a place to be feared?

Caller: *101 Dalmatians*.

Mastermind, BBC2

John Humphrys: Which bird has species called grey, yellow and pied?

Contestant: Piper.



MEDIA NEWS

AN unwelcome internal memo has reached BBC staff who thought they could put the threat of further redundancies behind them.

Thanks to falling property prices, the BBC now has a further £140m black hole in its finances. Plans to sell off Television Centre and other properties in west London by 2013 have been shelved: "You only need to look at the empty offices across the UK to see that we'll need to review this timetable," said the memo.

Staff in news and current affairs have been told to expect more cuts.

Meanwhile, however, not all offices are empty. Production teams at White City have had to vacate their offices to make way for a rapidly expanding sector at the BBC: BBC Property and BBC Corporate Real Estate, both of whom demanded the extra desks to give their teams more space in which to panic.

MORE than 1,000 staff at ITV are being sacked before the end of December, and many had looked forward to the office Christmas party as a chance to say goodbye to colleagues. So, naturally, ITV has banned Christmas parties – because of "difficult trading conditions".

Hard to reconcile that with the £1m bonus being given to Michael Grade, thought the luvvies. But there was more to come. Max Graesser, ITV's director of operations, issued the following appeal last week on the company's intranet "watercooler" site: "These are difficult times for commercial broadcasters. We should all be thinking about saving ITV money – including bringing our own hot drinks and HobNobs to meetings."

Treble cuppas and biccies all round!

AS OF last Monday, under the new compliance regime instigated by the BBC as a result of the Russell Brand and Jonathan Ross affair, the corporation started to introduce new rules.

These are designed to "strengthen the BBC's editorial supervision of all programmes made by talent or agent-owned independent productions to avoid any conflict of interest". A sensible idea, perhaps, given the last *Eye*'s revelation of the tangled web of relationships between the BBC and the pair's respective production companies and agents.

As of this Friday, meanwhile, the slot so tragically vacated by *Friday Night With Jonathan Ross* until his return from suspension in January will be filled by stand-up comedy show *Live at the Apollo*.

The programme is made by production company Open Mike, owned by Addison Cresswell, who is Jonathan Ross's agent, the negotiator of his £18m BBC deal and the executive producer of *Friday Night With Jonathan Ross*. It will be presented by Michael McIntyre, whose agent is... Addison Cresswell.

ITV's celebration of the 60th birthday of Prince Charles, *We Are Amused*, took months of planning with the Prince's Trust and was to be a peak-time ratings banker for the increasingly desperate channel.

Involving comedy sketches recorded at the New Wimbledon Theatre, the show included gushing tributes to Charles and the trust, much to the delight of trust members. But there was a hiccup when schedulers insisted that ITV interrupt the royal show after an hour to go live to the results of the *X Factor* vote.

When the birthday bash resumed an hour later, 1.4m of its 7.3m audience had switched off, missing the *Always Look on the Bright Side of Life* finale and causing dismay at the Prince's Trust who had no idea that ITV would put a talent show phone-in ahead of a royal occasion.

"This is Barry, who commissions all our sensationalist documentaries about people with outrageous medical conditions"

ON 11 November, radio station TalkSport suspended presenter (and *Sun* columnist) Jon Gaunt pending an investigation into him calling a councillor a Nazi during a heated on-air debate about foster care.

He was sacked a week later as a result of "complaints about the content and nature of the broadcast". In the meantime, however, the BBC decided he was the perfect man to deliver an impassioned piece to camera on "the care system" for Andrew Neill's *This Week* show, broadcast on 13 November.

"THE BBC juggernaut is out of control," declared a headline in the *Daily Mail* on 5 November, over claims by "critics" that the corporation's commercial arm, BBC Worldwide, was "in danger of driving many rivals out of business... Critics also complained that BBC Worldwide could buy BBC programmes to sell around the world at under the market rate."

So what is BBC Worldwide good for? Well, helping to prop up the circulation of the *Daily Mail*, for one thing.

Last week, as the *Mail* continued to fan the smouldering flames of "Sachsgate" on a daily basis, readers could also enjoy the paper's "Recipe of the Day" slot – "brought to you in association with *BBC Good Food Magazine*" – and collect vouchers for the paper's latest relentlessly plugged DVD giveaway, a series of "Children's Classics" including dramatisations of CS Lewis, Beatrix Potter and Frances Hodgson Burnett stories made by the BBC and... licensed by BBC Worldwide!

"WHY would I go to Five?" demanded Sky One controller Richard Woolfe in an exasperated denial that he was interested in joining the fifth terrestrial channel in June.

"I am at a company that embraces creativity and loves creativity. I am very flattered that people haven't got enough to do in their lives that they think these things. But I am here and I am loving my job. I won't move from Sky until the job is done and the job isn't done. It's beginning to get done and I will see it through."

Well, obviously bringing back Cilla Black to present a dating show and seeing *Gladiators* lose half its audience were the last pieces of the jigsaw at Sky One, for last week it was announced that Woolfe would be leaving to become channel controller of... Five.

AD NAUSEAM

SEE if you can spot the deliberate mistake: *The Ascent of Money*, a new Channel 4 series presented by rent-a-don Niall Ferguson, is a many-tentacled financial history that ends up showing how the Masters of the Universe have turned out to have clay feet.

Its sponsor? The Department of Tourism for the Cayman Islands, tax haven, home to 279 banks, 10,000 hedge-fund registrations and an offshore mecca for structured finance and securitisation. Why not go there on holiday and see for yourself what went so disastrously wrong!

FOR T-Mobile's most recent push, its ad agency Saatchi & Saatchi has taken a simple sales slogan and made it the centrepiece of its campaign.

"You won't find more minutes for £30. Guaranteed," it said, and then bludgeoned home the point by showing people looking for things in funny places and not finding them.

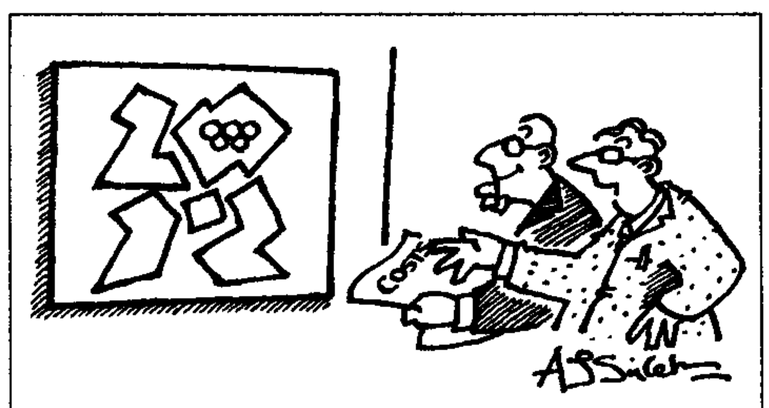
Unfortunately, it seems it may have protested too much. It turns out that you can indeed find more minutes for £30, should you be so inclined, and, much as you'd expect, a good place to start is the websites of some of T-Mobile's rivals.

The Advertising Standards Authority announced last week that it was banning T-Mobile's press-work for that very reason, after T-Mobile's competitor 3 complained.

PEPSI's recruitment to health secretary Alan Johnson's Change4Life anti-obesity campaign is quite a coup for the firm – not least because two of its UK products, Cola and Walkers crisps, are part of the problem rather than the solution.

Pepsi promised the government it would lend the sports stars it has under contract to advertise exercise rather than the usual fatty, salty snacks and sugary drinks. It's a good deal for Pepsi, which in effect will be able to tell the public they can guzzle cola and crunch crisps just so long as they go for a run afterwards to work off the calories. In return, the company gains an implied tick of approval from government, and has diverted the Department of Health from backing a more direct message: If you want to avoid diabetes and heart disease, etc, stop eating and drinking crap.

So how did Pepsi land the deal without even having to promise which of its stars would advertise where or when? Pepsico's ability to hire Labour characters such as former health secretary Alan Milburn on £25,000 a year as an adviser must surely help it negotiate its way round the current health secretary's department. But, as *Eye* readers are already aware (1220), in August the DoH hired marketing firm Freud Communications to run the anti-obesity campaign and, by coincidence, both Pepsico and subsidiary Walkers Crisps are clients of... Freud Communications!



"An inspirational logo, it already looks broke..."

Obamaballs

"Can Barack Obama help fix our property market? Risborough estate agent says Obama election could prove turning point."
– The Bucks Herald

"He did not win this election so convincingly on the back of these liberal credentials. He actually moved his message and politics much more to the centre and even on occasion to the right. In other words he was incredibly pragmatic... Running a pub or a group of pubs you must be similarly pragmatic. What do your customers want? Just because you cannot stand the standard lager drinker, doesn't make them bad for business."
– "What Can the Pub Industry Learn from Barack Obama?", The Publican

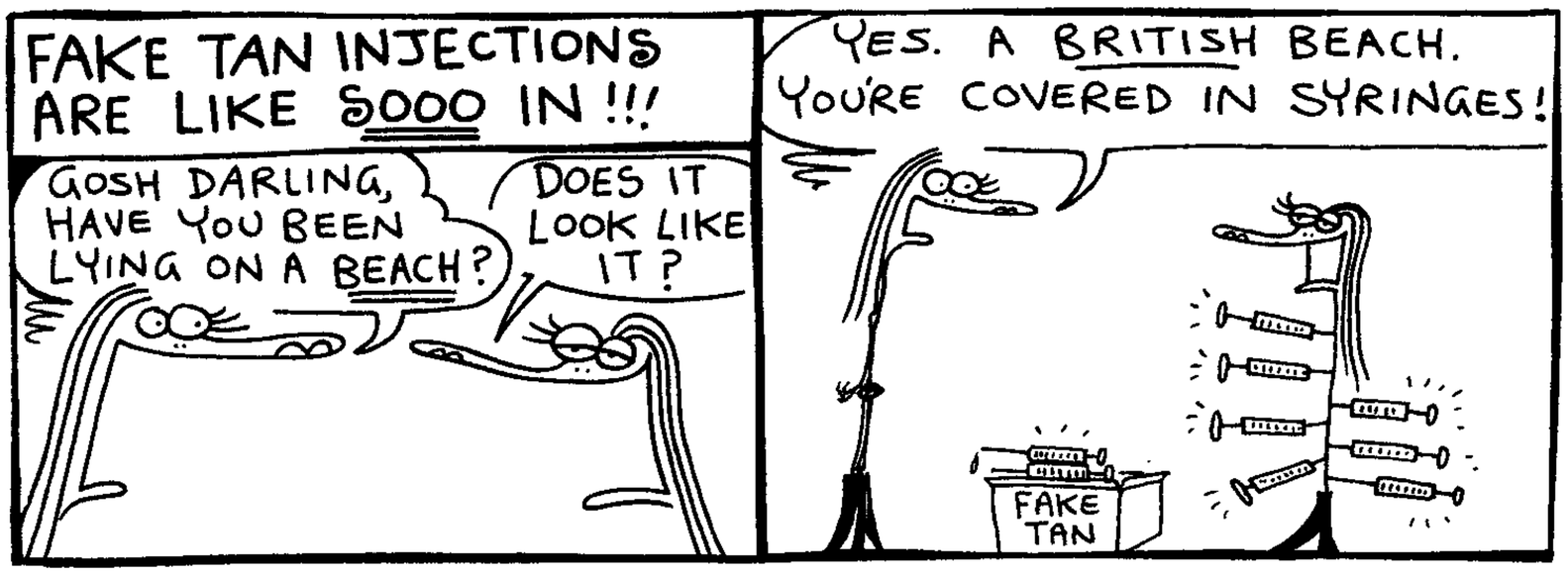
"I believe that the pride in sport is that if you have the quality you play. You have the example of Barack Obama in the United States – that is one of the countries where, if you have the quality, you will make it. When the system brings people to the top just because they have the quality, I think that is right. And in sport that is the case."
– Arsenal manager Arsène Wenger

"WOW! Obama-Rama £1 Voucher Giveaway!"
– Voucher, decorated with portrait of president-elect, offering £1 off music games and videos from cdwow.com

"Dramatic change is all around us. Who would have guessed just six months ago that a charismatic young man would become the 44th President of the USA, or that the world would face its worst financial crisis since the Depression of the 1930s... Who would have guessed that New Zealand meat and fibre producers, who had just finished their worst financial year in real terms for two generations, would now be talking about a thing called T150; a target of $150 for a good mid-season lamb within a five-year period? Just as Obama has inspired millions of Americans that there is hope of a better future, my hope is that in our own small way the T150 campaign will lift the spirits and aspirations of New Zealand sheep farmers and give them the hope of a better future ahead."
– Speech by chairman Bruce Wills to the New Zealand Federated Farmers' Meat and Fibre Council

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


FAKE TAN INJECTIONS ARE LIKE $000 IN !!!
GOSH DARLING, HAVE YOU BEEN LYING ON A BEACH?
DOES IT LOOK LIKE IT?
YES. A BRITISH BEACH. YOU'RE COVERED IN SYRINGES!
FAKE TAN

SIGNAL FAILURES

West-coast painline

THE west coast mainline's "modernisation" will finish next month, just a decade later than had the railways not been privatised and only 4.5 times over budget (after cutbacks). Or perhaps Network Rail won't finish it next month: just in case, some trains in the modernised timetable won't start until late January. Er, or later.

Passengers using **Nuneaton** station might have expected some reward for their patience while the station area was gradually upgraded. But it turns out Virgin will cut two thirds of its Nuneaton-London trains, and none will leave Nuneaton between 8.46am and 9.03pm. Most services to London will be by London Midland, using local trains that take half an hour longer than today's usual journey of about 74 minutes.

Many commuters chose to live around **Northampton** because of the ease of commuting on an express intercity train, with seats for all. The £9bn modernisation replaces that long-standing service with a London Midland train taking more than 30 percent longer.

For **Stockport** passengers, modernisation wipes out 41 percent of trains to Birmingham; six trains (every two hours through the day) to Bristol are replaced by one, at 6.08am. The trains will still run, but the Department for Transport (DafT) has ruled that they must whizz through Stockport (population: 300,000) to keep out of the way of Virgin's three Manchester-London trains per hour, one more per hour than now. **Macclesfield** will suffer similar cuts – although the extra Manchester-London trains will go via Crewe instead of Macclesfield.

Some commuter trains from mid-**Cheshire** will terminate at Stockport; modernisation stops them going to Manchester any more. Commuters are advised to change to trams at Altrincham, although an ordinary Northwich-Manchester season ticket isn't valid on the trams.

The root of the problem is Britain's special way of modernising railways. Other countries start by working out the price, and realise it's cost-effective to build new railways to relieve busy mainlines. After pouring £9bn into Victorian infrastructure, Britain still finds itself short of capacity on its busiest mainline. It fell to the Labour government to pick the winners and losers, so naturally the biggest cities – producing the most profitable services – will gain at the expense of other stations, which can be important to local economies.

Virgin will tout £8 London-Manchester tickets, and £5 to Birmingham, to fill "a lot of empty seats". To DafT civil servants, somehow it makes sense to entice people to make extra journeys while existing passengers endure worse train journeys or switch to creaking roads.

TRANSPORT Secretary Geoff Hoon used a Commons debate on a third Heathrow runway to regurgitate the air lobby's arguments, accusing anyone opposed to the scheme of trying to "damage British business" and "export" British jobs to the continent.

On the same day, tourism minister Barbara Follett was apologizing to thousands of visitors delayed on the tube, light railway and congested roads as they struggled to a tourism exhibition in Docklands. Among the overseas visitors was Turkey's tourism minister, who said: "I thought Istanbul was bad enough." The apologetic Follett explained to the World Travel Market ministers' summit: "The weather and transport system can be variable in this country." (The weather, outside Labour's control, was typical for November.)

Labour's priority for the tube when London boomed was squandering billions of pounds setting up public-private partnerships for infrastructure and then picking up the pieces after the biggest PPP went bust. Now its response to the everyday shambles on London's transport is to pretend Britain's reputation and economy will be saved as long as more Brits can fly out of Heathrow for holidays and hen parties.

'Dr B Ching'

ECO-GNOMICS

Prize chumps

WHAT news from the annual Green Awards, held in London this month to celebrate "creativity in sustainability", with prizes awarded for best green website, PR campaign, advert and so on?

Given that the advertising industry has long been slammed for a series of product promotions that are pure greenwash, all ears were on the keynote speech from the chairman of the judges, chief executive of the Advertising Association, Baroness Peta Buscombe.

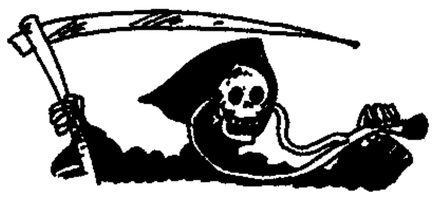
The baroness was modestly introduced as "the most formidable advocate the commercial communications sector has seen in years"; and she duly did her utmost to boost the credentials of her industry. "Marketing saves lives," she announced, without a hint of irony.

"Be assured, the communications industry takes the environment very seriously," she purred, before reassuring her audience that "the vast majority of adverts are not greenwash". So much for the growing number of companies who over the last two years have been forced by the Advertising Standards Authority to withdraw misleading green claims.

Over a long and emotional evening, a civil servant from DEFRA fell over while climbing on to the stage to accept his award, and several categories turned out to have no winner at all, to the irritation of sponsors and applicants who had paid to enter on the basis that they might actually win something. To make matters worse, shortlisted companies included pollution champion EON-UK, famous for wanting to bring coal-fired power back to Britain at Kingsnorth in Kent. And the winner of the "best outdoor green ad" category? That green icon of environmental responsibility, Coca-Cola!

One advantage of the economic downturn is that come 2009 people may be reluctant or unable to pay for absurd self-congratulatory green tosh like the Green Awards.

MEDICINE BALLS



Don't Stop that Pigeon

"MOST entrants were quite apologetic. Connecting for Health hadn't delivered what they wanted so they had to design something themselves that worked." So said one of the judges at this year's BT e-health Insider Awards when asked why most of the winners were local IT projects that had nothing to do with the government's NHS IT programme.

Connecting for Health (CfH) has issued a robust defence of itself on its website (www.connectingforhealth.nhs.uk/factsandfiction) but when I read off the "12 most common myths" (eg costs are spiralling, the project is plagued with delays, the centralist model is unworkable, the technical architecture is flawed), no one seemed keen to refute them, despite there being a large CfH contingent in the audience.

On the plus side, the NHS Spine and broadband seem to be working OK and PACS, which enables X-rays and scans to be stored electronically and viewed on screens, is working well in many hospitals. And CfH did have one winning entry: a system for assessing what's an emergency and what isn't. It apparently saves 700 inappropriate ambulance journeys a month in the north-east alone. Generally, CfH has come unstuck when trying to deliver services at a local level. For example, the NHS Care Records Service (CRS) is supposed to swiftly link patient information from different parts of the NHS electronically, but its roll out at London's Royal Free hospital was a disaster (see Eye Told You So, issue 1223). Why?

One award judge blamed Richard Granger, the former programme director. "Granger kicked out anyone who'd previously worked in NHS IT and decided to design an entirely new system from scratch with people who hadn't worked in healthcare. He believed he could control the whole programme from the centre, without learning any of the lessons from the past. But command and control only works with very simple, linear systems. Throw a brick out of the window and you can predict where it lands. But healthcare is far more complex, more like a pigeon than a brick. Throw a pigeon and you've no idea where it will land. If you're clever, you get people together locally, decide where you need your pigeon and put down bird seed. If you're Richard Granger, you get the pigeon to land by tying a brick to it."

In contrast, the Scottish Emergency Care Summary, a simpler equivalent to the English Care Records Service, is up and running well and won an award in the category sponsored by CfH. A Welsh entry also won its category. So what are they doing that the English aren't? As a Welsh IT expert put it: "Scotland and Wales are smaller communities, with more collaboration and co-operation than the market-obsessed English NHS. They assume that NHS staff are generally trustworthy and have developed 'higher trust' IT systems that are simpler and easier to access, and have managed to gain the consent of patients. Contrast this to England, where no one can be trusted and the media is paranoid about leakage of confidential data. So you've built hugely complex programmes with military grade security to block the few bad people but which take ages to log on to, navigate around or swap user. At their worst, they stop you practising medicine, rather than enable you to do the job better."

Granger's parting shot was to boast at how tough his contract negotiations had been, leaving companies such as BT – the award sponsors – with draconian penalties if they don't deliver. But the contracts are so inflexible that delays are inevitable. BT has now had to lay off 10,000 staff partly because it has no successful NHS IT model to sell globally. The NHS may only lose several billion as a result, but the opportunity cost in terms of lives that could have been improved or saved with a working IT system delivered on time, is much greater.

M.D.

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

SMART ALEC

LAST month Newham council voted in favour of allowing London City Airport to increase flights from 80,000 to 120,000 a year – an extra 150 flights a day. The protests of east London residents worried about noise, pollution and global warming were brushed aside. Anti-airport campaigners were dismayed at the about-turn of London mayor Boris Johnson, who had said he opposed the airport's expansion and then said he was actually in favour of it.

Newham Labour councillor and City Airport consultative committee member Alec Kellaway is a big supporter of the airport, faithfully following the line of Newham mayor "Sir" Robin Wales that it is "good for jobs" and helps regenerate the area. Alas, very *little* of the business that comes through the airport actually stays in the borough – although there are opportunities for cleaners.

City Airport earlier this year hired big-hitting PR firm Hill & Knowlton to spin its case. H&K is owned by the US media/PR conglomerate WPP – in which, according to Newham council's register of members' interests, Cllr Alec Kellaway happens to own shares worth more than £25,000. No conflict of interest there, then.

● ONE interesting thing about the leaked list of nutters and saddoes in the BNP is the way it includes often indiscreet notes about their occupations and skills, such as "police officer", "teacher", "bodyguard", "reflexologist" etc – the last of these obviously useful for treating members whose arms are aching after long "Sieg Heil" saluting sessions.

Sometimes the notes reveal why individuals are no longer signed up to the cause. After one former member's entry it says: "Will not be renewing… embarrassed by revelations in *Private Eye* re [BNP] councillors." If the wimp is put off by such peccadilloes as bribery (*Eye* 1160), racist singing (1198), non-payment of council tax (1173), benefit fraud (1172), attacks on Asian newsagents (1172), dishonest election leaflets (1165), criminal convictions (1159) and general stupidity (1162 & 1167), why, they're better off without him!

LIGHTS OUT

THIS YEAR Chesterfield borough council cut grants to three bodies giving free advice on employment and other subjects to people on low incomes: the north-east Derbyshire unemployed workers centre, the citizens advice bureau and the Chesterfield law centre.

More recently the council has gained £4.2m from central government, which is supposed to be spent on combating "worklessness" in the town. Hurrah! So is it going to reinstate the funding for the advice centres? No – but it is going to spend £24,000 of the new dosh on, er, Christmas lights. As the Lib Dem council's leader Ray Russell says: "By encouraging people to come… to see the Christmas lights we are bringing business into the town, which in turn creates and sustains jobs and helps our local economy." Of course it does.

STOP PRESS: Last week the council admitted the lights would not be ready to turn on as scheduled on Sunday. Poor show.

CARRY ON JUNKETING

HAVING got rid of one of their own who protested at the amount of taxpayers' money being spent on freeloading, Rotherham's ruling Labour councillors have settled back into doing what they do best.

In May *Eye* 1210 reported how the council had cut a £7,500 grant to the local talking book charity while seeing fit to spend £7,400 sending a party of councillors and officers to a piss-up – sorry, awards ceremony – in London. When Labour councillor Peter Thirlwall said his colleagues maybe had their priorities a bit wrong, he was charged with "bringing the party into disrepute". After his appeal was dismissed he quit the party in disgust (*Eyes passim*).

In June Rotherham sent four councillors and two officers to a conference in London. The officers and councillors Jane Austen [*sic*] and Hilda Jack travelled down the day before and stayed at the £140-a-night Victoria Park Plaza hotel – at a cost of £560 plus travel. Cllrs Glyn Whelbourn and Colin Barron travelled by train on the day. While Barron roughed it in standard class, Whelbourn decided only first was good enough – costing the taxpayer £258.75 return.

These details were winkled out of the council by a member of the public, Don Buxton, via a freedom of information request. Mr Buxton is not happy at the waste of money, although the nature of the conference made him smile. It was the annual gathering of the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

● THE Scottish Nationalist-led council in Fife is under fire for setting aside £1m to help transport company Stagecoach set up a passenger hovercraft service across the Firth of Forth from Kirkcaldy to the Edinburgh suburb of Portobello, for which no business plan is yet in place.

Although Stagecoach is on target to make nearly £200m profit this year, it wants Fife and Edinburgh councils and the Scottish government to put their hands in their pockets to get the scheme running. So far Fife council is the only public body to have expressed willingness to part with any dosh. The fact that in 2007 Stagecoach boss Brian Souter donated £625,000 to the SNP, which runs Fife in coalition with the Lib Dems, is of course entirely unconnected.

RADIATING SUCCESS

HOLLOW laughter in Plymouth, which has been named Britain's third most "sustainable" city (after Bristol and Skidrow-on-Sea) by the green charity Forum for the Future.

FFF's index ranks cities according to environmental performance, quality of life and "future-proofing" – how well they address issues such as climate change, recycling and biodiversity. Plymouth came top in "environmental factors", scoring high marks for air and water quality. All of which has surprised locals, some of whom have nicknamed Plymouth "the Sellafield of the South".

Why so cynical? Well, there was the recent leak of 280 litres of water contaminated with radioactive tritium into the River Tamar from the nuclear sub HMS *Trafalgar*, moored at Devonport dockyard. The leak was the biggest spill of its kind for 23 years. Council officials responsible for emergency planning only found out about the leak after it was reported on local radio on 11 November – four days after it happened.

There is also the little problem of asbestos. According to government statistics Plymouth ranks as the third worst UK "hotspot" for asbestos-related deaths – many being associated with Devonport dockyard.

● AS predicted in the last *Eye*, Salford council leader John Merry has pushed through his controversial plan to waste £175,000 on expanding the pisspoor *LIFE IN Salford* [*sic*] propaganda sheet. The plans were passed by a full council meeting – but not before the figures had been "revised" for the third time. An extra £6,000 "income" had been added – from the Labour council's own spend on recruitment advertising – taking the notional total up to £36,000. Sounds great – except the day before the meeting, news broke that the council had a £15m budget deficit and had invited all of its 11,300 workforce to volunteer for redundancy. So where are the recruitment ads going to come from now?

CRAPITA CONNECTION

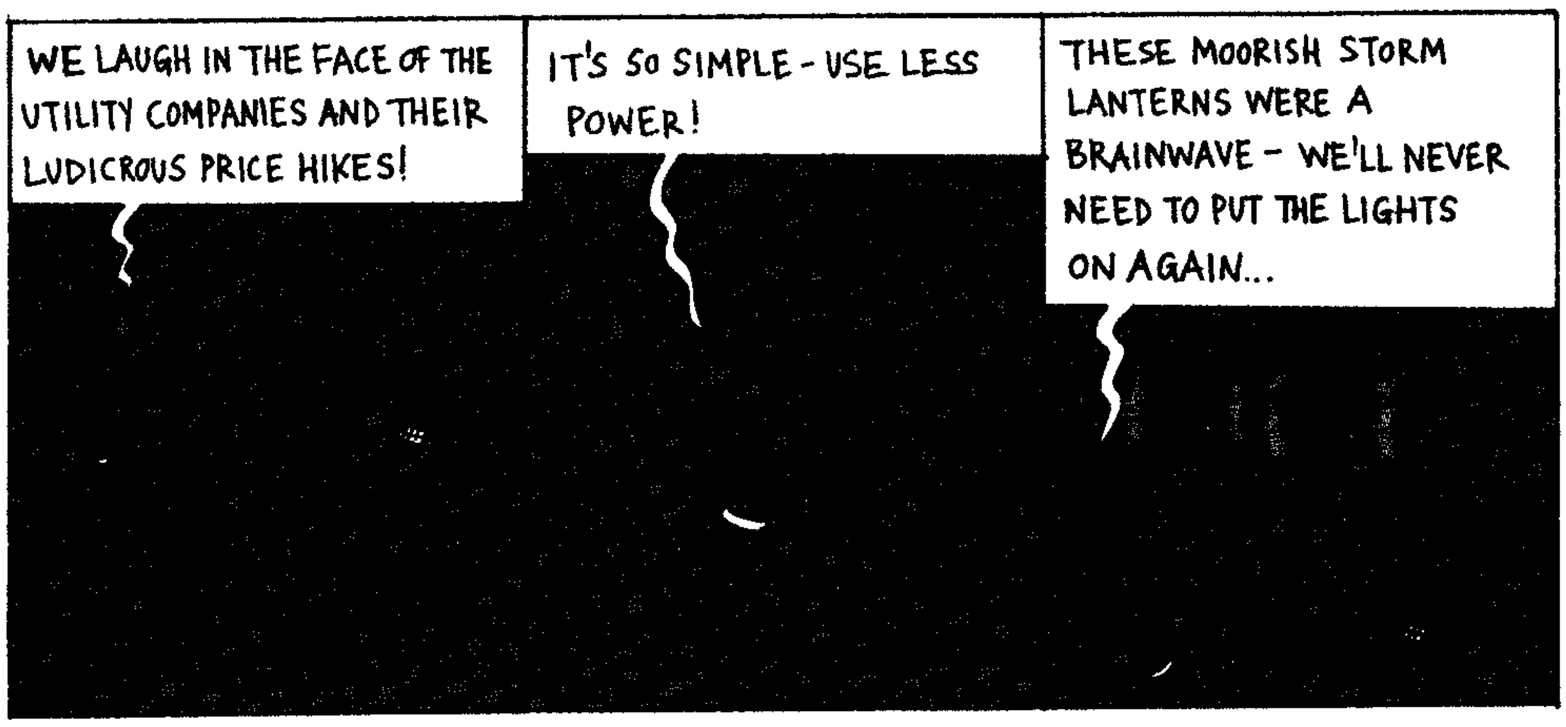
THE hard-faced manner in which Haringey's director of social services Sharon Shoesmith has gone about defending her department's role in the Baby P case comes as no surprise to those who know her of old.

Her first job in Haringey was in education, after the government invited Crapita, for whom she worked as a schools inspector, to run the borough's schools. In 2003 Shoesmith became Haringey's education director, and stayed on when the council took the education service back in-house the following year. She became notorious for refusing to have meetings minuted and sliding out of inconvenient commitments by claiming that other people must have misunderstood what had been agreed. A useful skill – which may not, alas, be sufficient this time.

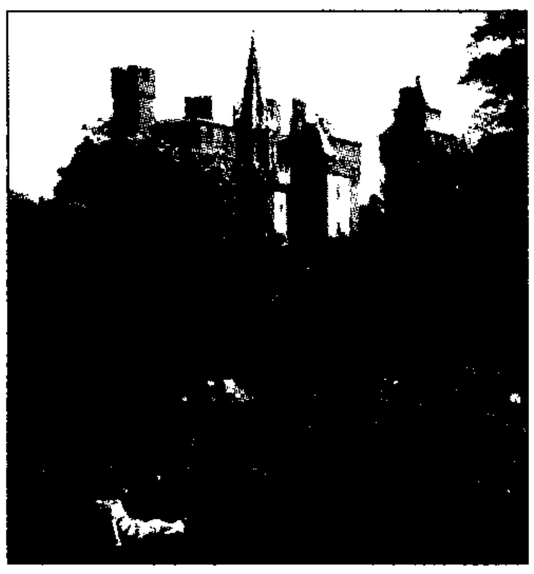
PS: Congratulations to the council communications team which emerged "highly commended" from the recent *PR Week* Awards 2008. None other than the council that has done so much to present its case clearly and openly to the world in recent weeks… the London borough of Haringey!

PPS: A press release informs us that Haringey's "enforcement service" has been shortlisted for a "prestigious" award in the "Safer Communities" category in the *Local Government Chronicle* Awards for tackling "problem social clubs". The ceremony "will take place at The Brewery in London on 5 February". Why do the words "couldn't", "organize" and "piss-up" come to mind?

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER


WE LAUGH IN THE FACE OF THE UTILITY COMPANIES AND THEIR LUDICROUS PRICE HIKES!
IT'S SO SIMPLE - USE LESS POWER!
THESE MOORISH STORM LANTERNS WERE A BRAINWAVE - WE'LL NEVER NEED TO PUT THE LIGHTS ON AGAIN...

NOOKS and CORNERS



EVEN in difficult times, it seems, money can still be found to spoil things unnecessarily: in this case, Bute Park, a much used and loved oasis in the centre of Cardiff.

Laid out as a pleasure ground in the later 19th century below the walls of the 3rd Marquess of Bute's fantastic castle, much of it was given – along with the castle – to the city by the 5th Marquess in 1947. The city council later bought more land (today the park covers 130 acres) and then established an arboretum, recently described as "the richest urban park for trees, quite probably in the world".

Bute Park is listed at grade I by the Welsh historic building and environment agency, Cadw, on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. Not that such an accolade seems able to protect it.

Back in 1924, the then Cardiff Corporation proposed to build a road through the grounds of the castle. This was described by Lord Bute's representative as "an act of vandalism… it is not like crossing a meadow. It is crossing a miniature Hampton Court". The proposal was defeated; but the council is trying again, as it were, by planning to drive an access road through Bute Park – spoiling what is in part its own creation, and in defiance of official Wales planning guidance.

The proposed road is designed to provide access for maintenance and deliveries to the nurseries in the park, and for commercial vehicles servicing "events" in Cooper's Fields. It is also intended to solve the conflict between pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles at the North Gate by entering the park from nearby and leaping over the Dock Feeder canal by a concrete bridge. The road is also intended to carry articulated lorries: so much for the peace, quiet and safety of people walking or cycling in the park.

The initial proposals provoked strong opposition from Cardiff residents, the Welsh Historic Garden Trust, the Green Party and many others. Now the council is trying again, mitigating the damage by reducing the scale of the bridge and making what it calls a widened "path" single track, with passing places. Even so, this road will be 6.6m wide, and will be raised 40cms above the ground – with tapered ramps either side to protect tree roots. In consequence, nearby trees will have to have their lower branches cut back to enable the articulated lorries to pass – 50 to 100 times a week, it is estimated.

Cadw, which said the initial proposal "would cause significant harm to the historic and visual character of the park", has now withdrawn its opposition. And the Welsh Heritage Lottery Fund, which is giving a £3.1m grant towards the maintenance and restoration of Bute Park, declines to object as the bridge and road were not part of the council's application for assistance.

The nurseries have functioned perfectly well until now without being serviced by articulated lorries. The suspicion is that that the council plans to privatise them, just as the real purpose of the road is to enable more commercially profitable events in the park. One vociferous opponent, Professor Kevin Morgan at the school of City and Regional Planning at Cardiff University, points out that "Cardiff likes to project itself as one of the leading cities in Britain in terms of sustainability, husbanding its resources, and caring for the well being of its citizens… Yet there are still those in senior positions who think solely in terms of the commercial elements of a city." No surprise then that the council has given itself planning permission to build the wretched road. But why are the ever-supine Cadw and the HLF acquiescing in this vandalism?

TO Liverpool, European Capital of Culture for 2008, in case you had forgotten, where the steady attrition of historic buildings continues.

The situation is so bad that SAVE Britain's Heritage is mounting an exhibition in the city about what is going on early next year. Among the latest threats is an application to demolish Nos 18-26 Benson Street, humble and, of course, neglected Georgian buildings, well in advance of a new development merely to spare the applicant the cost of maintenance. And the city council has just approved an application by Westville Developments to demolish Nos 124-128 London Road to make way for new flats and shops. These include two Georgian houses which now comprise the Windsor public house, on a corner site.

As ever, the indomitable Florence Gerston of the Save Our City Campaign has led opposition, suggesting that the decision to make most of the proposed replacement flats into student accommodation was merely "a ruse" to overcome the planning committee's previous objections, rightly predicting that "the applicants will get their way this time…"

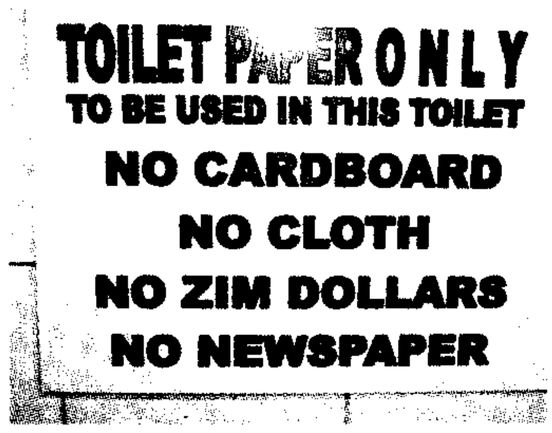
Unfortunately, the threatened buildings are not listed, although "their very variety is of interest, in terms of style, period and use. This kind of variety forms much of the character of any city street." Many cities have a local list of buildings of interest, and in her letter of objection, Miss Gerston points that she has pleaded repeatedly for the creation of a "local list" for Liverpool, but to no avail. "At the present rate, by the time a local list is created (if ever!), there will be precious little left to protect."

'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

The public must be reminded of the vital importance of great artists to our culture.
Right!
CAMPAIGN TO SAVE £50m TITIAN FOR THE NATION.
EMIN, FREUD, GORMLEY ETC. PLEDGE SUPPORT
DIANA AND ACTAEON
Even if it involves them banging on about some boring old master.
It's the price we have to pay.



I-SPY

Zimbabwe

Submitted by Howard Feasey.

£10 paid for similar submissions.

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

OPERA can be slow and elephantine onstage; but *off*stage in the past few weeks, it's been high drama at a hot pace.

The ink is barely dry on the Royal Opera's plan to run a second base in Manchester, and already the company is preparing us for a face-saving withdrawal. As reported in the last *Eye*, the ROH absurd proposals have been tried before, and nobody will ever find the £80m-plus needed to make them happen.

And you could hear the shuffle of retreating feet when Tony Hall, chief executive, went on record to emphasise that the costs couldn't come out of Covent Garden's own pocket and would have to come from government. "Let me be clear," he said. "We may not get funding for this. In that sense, it might not work." Never were truer words spoken.

Meanwhile, an "independent consultant" appointed by Arts Council England is considering the pros and cons and will report in January. The consultant was formerly the founding general administrator of Opera North, which is privately appalled by the prospect of the ROH invading its patch.

This is but dust, however, compared with the chaos at New York City Opera since the announcement that Gerard Mortier, incoming general director, has resigned before he's even officially started. The appointment of Mortier, one of the biggest and most controversial (not to say temperamental) names in arts management, was announced more than a year ago, since when he's been turning NYCO upside down in preparation for his arrival. Programmes, schedules and much of the way the company works have been jettisoned in favour of sharp, chic, cutting-edge new projects.

Worse, the current season has been cancelled to allow a major refurbishment of the building, pushed through by Mortier and financed by a promise of $100m from a businessman that seems to be conditional on "quality" performances. Which means it may now be withheld. Having done all this, La Mortier walks out, staging a queeny fit after a row with the board over funding.

Old hands saw it coming. In the summer Mortier put himself forward to run the Wagner *Festspielhaus* at Bayreuth, and since then he's been sniffing around the Madrid opera house.

In desperation the NYCO board has gone running to Michael Kaiser, the troubleshooter who took charge of Covent Garden a decade ago and managed to rescue it. One person he won't be turning to for help as he did before is Alberto Vilar, the high-profile opera patron who pledged money he didn't have to Covent Garden, the Met, the Kirov and a host of other houses who were then left high and dry.

After three years of legal process, Vilar has been found guilty by an American court on 12 charges of fraud and money-laundering. His lawyers say they will appeal. But as things stand he now faces a near-certain prison sentence of up to 20 years. Wherever he ends up in will be a stark contrast to the palatial marble-and-gold interiors and Mozartian statuary of his Manhattan condo. But if his close friends Placido Domingo, Renée Fleming, Valery Gergiev et al stand by him, the jail's musical life should at least improve.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

Letters

Prize fool?

Sir,

Shame on you. That you have allowed Lord Gnome to give space to Ms Cavendish (Paul Foot Awards, Eye 1223) simply continues your warped approach to children, exemplified earleir this year – as I pointed out at the time – when you enthusiastically jumped on the easy bandwagon of criticising paediatricians who strive to protect children from harm.

I repeat my point that Private Eye has never displayed any particular knowledge of, nor any great interest in, children as individual human beings. You are aiming at the wrong target, and it is sad to see a journal with some great campaigning journalism behind it (and, one hopes, more to come) failing to appreciate who is the underdog here. It's the children, Strobes: not the parents. If mags like yours can't see that they need to speak up for the children, then things have come to a pretty pass.

And to use Paul Foot as your headline to give Ms Cavendish publicity...

Words fail me.

PETER EHRHARDT,

Consultant Paediatrician, Burnley, Designated Doctor for Safeguarding, East Lancashire.

Back firing

Sir,

In your article "Faulty Guns/Chain non-reaction" (In The Back, 1223), you call the weapon itself "the problem gun". Not quite true. The coaxial (mounted alongside the main gun) chain gun is very reliable – designed by Americans, after all. The problem is with the electrical system in the Warrior vehicle which can sometimes switch the gun on when not neccessary (or desirable). Minor, I know, but I wouldn't want you to get sued by Hughes (designer) or Heckler and Koch (manufacturer)!

Yours faithfully,
PAUL JACKSON,

Via email.

PS. In 1918, four years after war started, the stupid old donkeys commanding the BEF/RFC had 22,000 combat aircraft. In 2008, seven years after invading Afghanistan – the chaps still don't have enough helicopters.

● *Apologies for any confusion. We should have made it clear the fault is linked to the firing system rather than the gun itself. Ed.*

Sir,

I am compelled to point out that the photograph used to illustrate the story 'Chain non-reaction' in the back of Eye 1223 features an L7A2 General Purpose Machine Gun, and not the BAE Systems-produced chain gun used in the Warrior IFV which was the subject of the story.

GAVIN BAILEY,

Via email.

Rooum with a view

Sir,

Re: Rebecca Rooum's letter (Paice Setter, Eye 1221, responding to Medicine Balls, 1220). As a bona fide NHS Whistleblower with a Report verifying my concerns regarding substandard care at North Staffordshire NHS Trusts, I wish to make the following comments. In March 2002, a Commission of Health Improvements Report stated as follows "CHI was informed that junior doctors working in medicine were often inadequately supervised and often left alone on wards, particularly on the medical assessment unit (MAU). During an evening visit we found only two junior doctors covering MAU, which was full to capacity, with a further junior doctor covering MAU and emergency admissions; one junior doctor covered the medical wards and one covered medical outliers but these patients could be on wards on either site. CHI felt this situation posed a potential clinical risk to patients."

Professor Paice was informed of the above in 1998 as she was my supervising Postgraduate Dean. She took no action. Her friend Professor Needham is currently visitor to the above hospital for the GMC and made no comments regarding the above issues. Our conclusion therefore is that she is not "entirely committed to the support and welfare of junior doctors and passionate about improving their working conditions and opportunities".

I understand that Rebecca Rooum is a PA but even PAs are able to read the basics of Article 10 of the Human Rights Act 1998. Sedley J in 1999 pointed out "free speech included "not only the inoffensive, but the irritating, the contentious, the eccentric, the heretical, the unwelcome and the provocative, provided that it did not tend to provoke violence.Freedom only to speak inoffensively is not worth having" .

Professor Paice's subjective view is not the " law" although she may think it is.

Regards,
DR RITA PAL,

(Part of the Campaign Group to Reinstate Dr Scot Jnr)

Lookalike

Tinky Winky

Davis

Sir,

I couldn't help noticing whilst watching Dragons' Den that the BBC's ex-economic editor Evan Davis looks a little bit too much like Tinky Winky.

GETHIN HOPKIN, age 14

Somerset.

Damned statistics

Sir,

Re: Number Crunching.

-37% : Drop in the Labour vote at the Glenrothes by-election, according to Private Eye (1223, p.3)

+3% : Increase in the Labour vote at the Glenrothes by-election, according to the Returning Officer

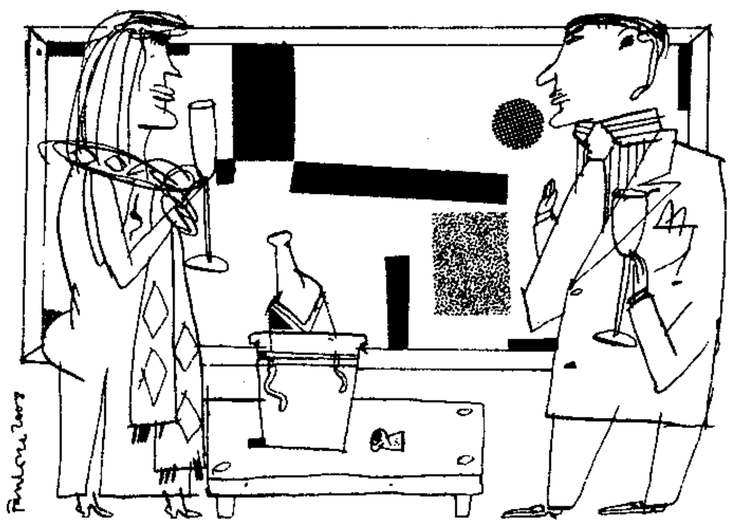
8,537 : Number of people who have already pointed this out to you.

Yours sincerely,
JOHN CARTWRIGHT,

Croydon.

● *Apologies. It was the Labour majority in Glenrothes which fell by 37%, not the vote. Ed.*

Scenes You Seldom See



"When I first saw it, I thought, investment. Then I thought, culturally cool. Then I thought, I actually like it"

Shoots and scores

Sir,

I feel I should defend Remote Controller from those tartan terrors north of the border. Whilst Graeme Gardiner is right to point out that Inverness CT play in the top flight in Scotland, whilst Bristol Rovers and Lincoln City play third and fourth tier football, both Bristol and Lincoln attract more fans than the vast majority of Scottish clubs, so in that respect, merit more of a mention than Inverness on the national news. Given that the BBC national news does not see fit to give the classified results from the top divisions in Northern Ireland or Wales (or indeed even to mention the results of the top two clubs in Wales, Swansea and Cardiff, who attract higher crowds than all but Celtic and Rangers in the Scottish Leagues), Remote Controller was, to use footballing parlance, 'spot on' in her observations.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN ROONEY,

Bristol.

Screaming ad-dabs

Sir,

What is it with you and BBC News 24? You have pursued a relentless vendetta since even before its inception. Yes it makes some cockups, but I will forgive a lot for the inestimable boon of never having to watch adverts.

Yours as ever,
MARTIN EDWARDS,

Birmingham.

Not so dumb?

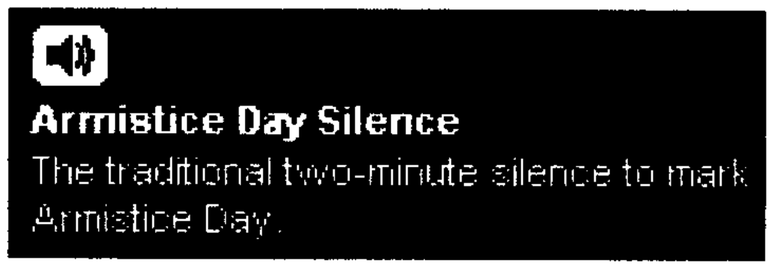
Sir,

Contestants on 'The Weakest Link' are regularly cited in your Dumb Britain column as evidence of their stupidity.

However, as anyone who has watched this programme will know, it is often the best tactic to answer a question incorrectly as the contestants who answer the most questions correctly are frequently chosen for elimination by their opponents who fear they may beat them to the prize money. In such a scenario giving a daft answer could actually be the most intelligent move.

Best wishes,
MR CERI WILLIAMS,

Cardiff.



BBC iPlayer listing

"The clocks have gone back, the American elections are over, we've had bonfire night – what is there left to look forward to?"

Gravesend injustice

Sir,

Your article in Nooks & Corners (1223) shows how easy it is to take a partisan view of an issue if you are fed information from one side of the debate. For your information there are many people in the town who support the proposal, including the remnants of our business community, which has been decimated by Bluewater.

Gravesend has great potential as an ancient port and fishing centre that is only 25 miles from central London . However, the centre of the town is run-down despite the recent property boom. Why is this? Because the scale of dilapidation is so great that no-one is prepared to invest. The area surrounding the proposed tower is depressing with the old buildings of character surrounded by streets of dilapidated buildings that have not been renovated for decades.

Without a bold statement this situation will not improve and it is a great idea to build an iconic building that will change the nature of the centre of the town and draw in investment. You said "of all places, Gravesend" – that is the point: people feel it is a bit of a joke and what we need are bold plans that will fulfil the potential of the lovely town we call home.

DAVID LIGHTOWLER ,

Via email.

Hey Preston

Sir,

Preston is not too well endowed with buildings of merit that it can afford to tamper with Winckley Square or allow St Walburges to decay following closure ('Piloti', Eye 1222).

Equally, that one of the very few worthwhile public utility buildings to be built in the area since WW2, the bus station, designed by local architects Grenfell-Baines & Hargreaves (aka Building Design Partnership) is to be swept away by yet another humungous shopping centre, says much about the priorities of local worthies.

GORDON PETHERBRIDGE,

North Bucks.

Get your coat

Sir,

I was delighted to see that Bournemouth has been nominated for a Rotten Boroughs award for banning Latin derived expressions (Eye 1223). Will they now change the motto on the town's coat of arms (Pulchritsudo et Salubritas)?

Voluntatibus optimis,
GEORGE HARRISON,

Via email.

Pedantry Corner

...Re the cartoon: "Oh dear, it's getting very acronymious". Very droll, but don't let grammar get in the way of a joke; OMG, SOB and the like cannot be pronounced as words, and are not aconyms but initialisms.

ERNEST GRADWELL.

● *Many thanks to all the pedants who pointed this out. Ed.*

...May I humbly draw your attention to a minor typographical error on page 18 of Eye 1223. Miss T Rara-Boomeeay is, in fact, the youngest daughter of the recently ennobled, Hertfordshire, d'Boomdeeays.

D.E. BRETT.

...Now look, this is important. You made a vast blunder in the "Life begins at..." (Eye 1223). The Ying Tong Song is as follows: Ying Tong x 5 then "Iddle I po". No Tiddle is involved. I assume your "Eye" was an attempt at humour.

TONY WILLIAMS.

...I note with concern that it would have been entirely impossible for a laptop to have been left in the toilet of the 8.28 from Oxshott (Prime Ministerial Decree No. 31) as the service in question is free of any such decadent neo-Railtrackist facility.

VIRGINIA CATMUR.

MANY EXCITING STALLS AS WELL AS THE USUAL ONES

Barn Church Christmas Fair & Market

Pseudo Names

...This puerile craze that appears to have overtaken your letters page must be brought to a halt before it descends into a soap opera.

CORINNE A. SCHÖNSTRIET.

...Signing one's letter "Patrick Thistle" or whatnot may seem jolly clever, but no one will know who really wrote it. How clever is that, then?

SUE DONIM.

...The recent outbreak of silly made up names is just another example of English schoolboy humour. We Antipodeans have completely grown out of such puerility.

SIDNEY HARBERBRIDGE.

...Enough of these silly people with names like football teams and fast food outlets, we despise you all.

MOLLY AIR & MISS ANN THROPE.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"There's no argument, he's [Anelka] arguably in the form of his life."
MARK LAWRENSON, BBC1
(Clive Matthews)

"It's bad for the wives, sitting on the side watching your husband go down."
MRS JOHANN MULLER, Sky Sports
(Paul Howard)

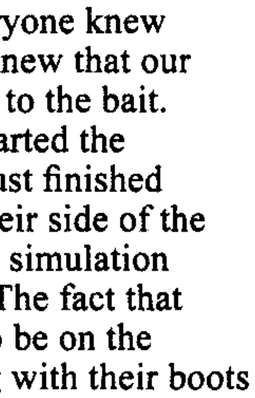
"Simon is tying his shoelaces to the left of the umpire's chair."
JONATHAN OVEREND, Radio 5 Live
(B.E. Walker)

"The defence seemed to be caught in two man's land"
EDDY HEMMINGS, Sky Sports
(Philip James)

"You can't win in football unless you win"
TONY MOWBRAY, BBC WM
(Christopher Morley)

Letter from **Tbilisi**

from Our Own Correspondent



IT SEEMS many people in the west are in a hurry to let Russia off the hook for invading our country in August.

They blame our president, Mikheil Saakashvili, for the five-day war. They say the brash and impulsive Saakashvili, or Misha as everyone calls him, took a gamble on the night of 7 August. Tired of dealing with our Russian-backed rebel region of South Ossetia, and eager to try out some of his new, Pentagon-issued toys, Misha decided to risk it all and invade. The occupation, looting and ethnic cleansing that followed were merely the wages of sin.

But in Georgia the truth appeared rather different and we'd been predicting war for months. We'd seen our spy-planes downed by Russian jets, hundreds of paratroopers sent into our territory without permission, and, on the day US secretary of state Condy Rice was in town, the Russian air force circled our skies in order to "cool hot heads in Tbilisi". Everyone knew something was up and we also knew that our impetuous leadership might rise to the bait.

In the days before the war started the Russians, funnily enough, had just finished massive military exercises on their side of the border, exercises that included a simulation of an operation inside Georgia. The fact that their 58th army just happened to be on the other side of the border sleeping with their boots on is, no doubt, why they were able to enter Georgia in vast numbers hours after hostilities broke out.

This happy coincidence, according to Vladimir Putin, was the only thing that stopped our government (sorry, our "regime") from committing genocide. Sending in thousands of troops into areas hundreds of miles away from South Ossetia, bombing our civilian ports and airports, as well as our oil pipelines and national parks: well, the aggressor had to be punished.

This explanation is almost comforting. It would, after all, be such a headache for our European partners if the Russians were up to their old tricks of invading small neighbours to try to install friendly regimes. Sure enough, before you can say "Prague Spring", the Germans, French and Italians have bent over backwards to accommodate the Russian line that they were "repelling Georgian aggression".

Misha, of course, says he only ordered the attack after Russian troops had already crossed into Georgia. He might be lying, but there is some evidence to support the idea. And even if he took the bait set by Russia hook line and sinker, there was always a lot more to the Red Army's unwelcome visit than "preventing a humanitarian disaster".

When French President Nicolas Sarkozy visited Moscow to press for a ceasefire agreement (which is still being studiously ignored by the Russian side), "prime minister" Putin told him that he intended to hang Misha by his balls: effectively, if a little coarsely, confirming that a major goal of the Russian invasion was regime change.

Our tiny army proved absolutely no match for the might of Russia, but there was one thing Mr Putin did not count on: Georgians are suckers for heroic defeats. Our history is packed with noble sacrifices and last stands against evil invaders. The fact is, we haven't won a war in 800 years and at least we shot a few planes down this time. So even though Misha lost the war, he hasn't lost his authority. Even his harshest critics realize that to get rid of him now would be to hand Mr Putin a total victory. And that's the one thing no one in Georgia wants.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

"Dilaram Dhakal first came to the hospital earlier this year," Dr Anil Bikram Karki told reporters at the BP Koirala Memorial Cancer Hospital in Chitwan, Nepal, "suffering from a type of skin cancer that covered most of the inside his right cheek. We surgically removed the melanoma without difficulty, and five months ago we covered over the damaged area inside his mouth with a large skin graft. Everything went really very very well except that, in retrospect, we probably should not have taken the skin graft from his chest. Because now Mr Dhakal has hair growing inside his mouth, and seems to be experiencing some considerable problems with eating and speaking."

Speaking later with some difficulty, Dhakal complained that "if only I had been warned beforehand about the possible consequences, I would not have undergone surgery at all. The hair is thick and bushy, and has spread right up into my throat, which causes me great difficulty in breathing, and also in speaking clearly. It really is a nuisance because every time I put food into my mouth, some of it gets pushed out through my nose by the hair growth and it does not look nice. I now have to pay daily visits to the hospital to have an inner mouth shave, just so I can eat and breathe."

Dr Karki added that "as the male chest normally has hair on it, the growth of hair inside his mouth is undoubtedly due to our having grafted his chest hair onto the operated cheek. The only remedy we can offer is for him to have the hair trimmed every day. As for the problems regarding eating, breathing, and speaking, we expect that they will probably get better with time after treatment with hormones." *(Kathmandu Post, 14/9/2008 Spotter:Ben)*

– o –

The Good Advice Column – underwater tips from an experienced scuba diver.

"Couples often write into this column, asking for advice about how to have sex while scuba diving. Basically, although popular, scuba sex is not recommended. Potential problems include the inhalation of water droplets in horizontal positions (which can lead to choking), keeping cumbersome equipment in the vertical position, losing buoyancy control when excited, and being unaware of the increased oxygen consumption required.

If you do wish to have scuba sex, then equipment should always be kept to a minimum. A full wetsuit is not practical, particularly if the zip is on the back. Balance is critical, as trying to grab hold of rocks or coral during sex can cause injury to the divers, and can damage delicate coral reefs. Stinging organisms, spiky sea urchins, stone fish, and scorpion fish are to be particularly avoided. Finally, make sure your partner knows the difference between your signs of distress and your signs of excitement. Thrashing about with your arms and legs could be an ambivalent signal. So if you feel you are in danger, we recommend a punch to your partner's groin. That signal will not be mistaken." (British Journal of Sexual Medicine 2008, vol. 31. Spotter: Annabel Shrimpton)

– o –

"Contrary to certain media reports," Deputy Council Leader Carol Hart told a meeting of Erewash Borough Council in Ilkeston, Derbyshire, "the plaque was most definitely not put on the park bench by the council. It's true that the bench in Stanton Road has gained something of a reputation in recent years as a favourite haunt of daytime drinkers, who regularly use it as a meeting place. But we have

no idea who fastened a neatly-stamped aluminium plaque to the back of the bench, almost identical to the ones the council uses, but bearing the following inscription:

'Dole Dossers' Bench. Erected by Erewash Borough Council for Ilkeston's finest scum to drink the day away and intimidate the old and the working class.'

"The plaque has now been removed by the council, and we vow in future to be more responsive to the problems of nuisance behaviour. Moreover, I would like to reassure whoever felt compelled to put the plaque there in the first place that, should a drink-related incident occur, it will be dealt with promptly." *(Nottingham Evening Post, 7/10/2008. Spotter: Betty Colley)*

From The Message Boards

Members of the online community respond to the major issues of the day...

Ed Balls announces child protection legislation

How can anyone take this man seriously? The name says it all. Ed indeed! God help us. – ***Brown_out***

The Old Gang have had their chance. Time to end the disastrous "democratic" experiment. ***–Sword_of_Truth***

Send nu labour 2 the jungle ☺ Nicola will eat Balls for breakfast ☺ lol! – ***Danny_Daz***

put-ing nu labor in charge of child pretection is like put-ing king heron in charge of a nursry school – Hunny_pot

wat them animal's done to baby p was barbar-ic ● if that mother ever has kid's I hope she never does ●● i am so angry i cant think no more – ***Eye_4_an_eye***

I saw baby peas in the supermarket today. They call them petits pois but everyone knows what they are. I was with my kids so I bought the ordinary peas, but it was upsetting and they really shouldn't be selling them at this time. – ***Emily***

Agree 1000 persent emerly ☹ an in front of kids 2 young 2 understand ● supermarkits = scum ●●● – ***Broken_Britan***

we r all 2 blame – ***Darling_Deneyze***

u blamin me u slag? – ***Justice_4_Maddie***

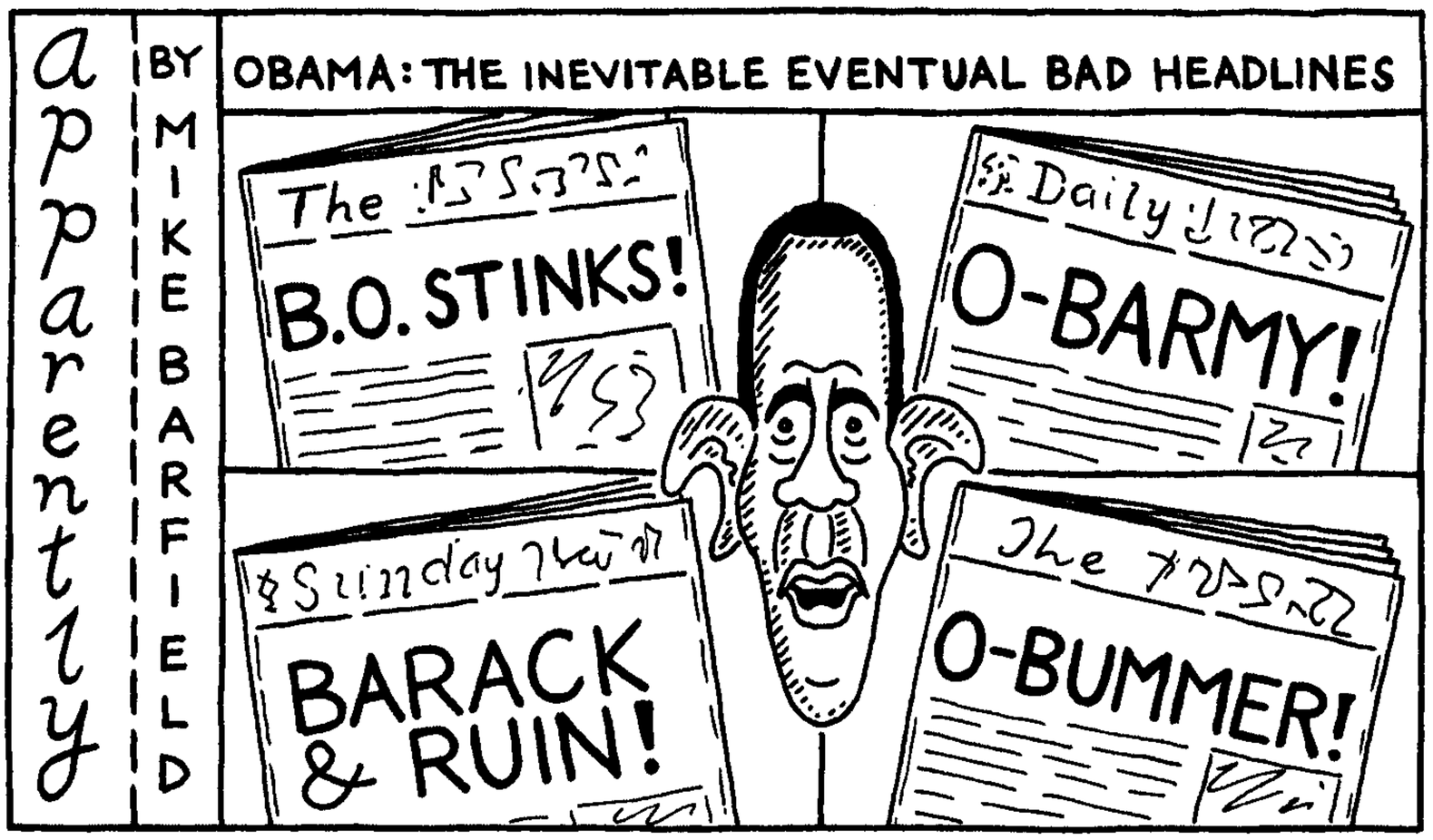
You've been a bit quiet lately Justice. – ***Rot_in_hell_Myra***

i warnd u befor u lie-in scumbag. i bin on all the maddie threds every day sinse may 2007. i hope ur kids die. by cot deth not by murder i wuldnt wish that on my wirst enemy. god bless baby p an angel in heven – ***Justice_4_Maddie***

evry-one shuld keep there poppys an ware them for baby pee, we can call them pop-pees – ***Binny***

I will wear my poppy AND suck my mints – ***Murray_Maniac***

Anyone not wearing a poppy comes near my kids I swear ill do time – ***Family_man***



PRIME MINISTERIAL DECREE NO. 32

From the Desk of the Supreme Leader

Comrades,

The logic of the historical dialectic has brought us to a point of unprecedented significance.

As everyone now recognises, the entire edifice of world capitalism has collapsed, as I predicted 30 years ago when I was a student organiser of the Edinburgh University Marxist-Leninist Collective, when I produced the first edition of my now legendary "Little Brown Book".

Inexorably since then history has evolved in line with my thinking, to the position we face today, where there is only one leader in the entire world who can create the New World Economic Order which is what the masses are yearning for.

I have just returned from Washington where I put my plan to the assembled world leaders at the conference which I had called under the guiding slogan "Building the Age of Change".

Like all great ideas, mine is very simple. The world has been brought to its knees by years of reckless borrowing – easy credit and bad debt.

And what is the solution? It is to borrow as much money as we can, to restore the availability of credit and to pay off all our outstanding debts. In other words, we replace all the toxic, dangerous, neo-Bushite-Blairist bad debt with new sound, responsible, prudent Brown-ite good debt.

In this way, all our problems will disappear. And under Comrade Chancellor Darling's bold New Five Year Plan, all comrades can do their patriotic duty and play their part in this great enterprise. They do not merely have to sit at home watching me on the television sorting out their problems to the admiration of the rest of the world.

They can take all the money that Comrade Chancellor Darling is going to give them in his Christmas Giveaway Budget and go out to our country's great shopping centres, such as Westfield and Bluewater (shortly to be renamed Brownwater), and spend, spend, spend, to kick start our economic revival. If they haven't got any money, they can go and borrow some at once. And Comrade Bankers, YOUR duty is clear. If people have no money to spend then YOU must lend it to them at an interest rate of 0%.

How different this is from the bad old days of Blairite-neo-Thatcherist-boom-and-bustism.

It is all in my new book "Das Capitalist", which I urge all comrades to borrow money to go out to buy, for the very reasonable pre-Christmas sale price of £19.99 (or one dollar or one euro).

No wonder that people are now looking to me to save them, rather than the now totally discredited neo-Govist Bullingdonist parasitical claque led by the arch-reactionary lickspittle Cameron and his disgraced crony Osborne, whome I am now regularly able to humiliate at Supreme Leader's Question Time in the Westminster Soviet.

Only last week, for instance, when I announced my innovative new Socialist plan for tax cuts, all the pathetic Cameron could reply was, "That's jolly unfair – that was our idea." And then to a standing ovation from all our Party delegates, I delivered the killer blow, "Well, it isn't any more" – at which the crushed Tory leader crept away like a whipped cur, with his tail coat between his legs and his top hat in tatters.

WARNING from Comrade Chancellor Darling

Any Comrade discovered failing to spend all his or her money on consumer goods in the High Street, will be charged under the Hoarding Act (2008) and be given an on the spot fine of up to £1000 which may be paid for by a loan from any of the recently nationalised high street banks.

Signed (in his absence)

Gordon Brown

The Supreme Lender

As another great Scottish leader MacDebt once said to Shakespeare:

"To Borrow and To Borrow and To Borrow"

Taken from The Little Brown Book, Chapter 35.

BIG SISTER IS WATCHING YOU!

Regulations Concerning The Employment Conditions Governing Workers In The Sex Industry

Male Comrades are warned that it will henceforth be a criminal offence punishable by a prison sentence not exceeding six years* to solicit sex from a sex worker who is:

a) Acting under the control of any male person who is deriving pecuniary gain from the exploitation of the aforesaid female sex worker without the male client ascertaining previously in writing before witnesses that he has exercised due diligence and a duty of care in investigating the bona fides of the sex worker as a self-employed VAT registered sex operative before entering into any transaction whatsoever.

b) All men are bastards.

c) That's it.

Jacqui Smith (Commissar for Internal Security and the Commercial Sex Sector)

*Subject to availability of cells in the new Titanic Prisons yet to be built.

CONGRATULATIONS to Comrade Mandelson for having the excellent idea of reversing the incredibly stupid decision to close 3000 post offices. Comrade Purnell, whose idiotic plan this was, should be hanging his head in shame. How right I was to summon Comrade Lord Mandelson back from Brussels where he and his colleagues were ill-employed dreaming up absurd plans to close down Britain's post offices under ridiculous Government rules. GB

GORDON'S DAY OF SHAME

by Our News of the World Staff ***Phil Wallet***

CELEBRITY PM Gordon Brown has been caught being unfaithful to his long-time partner, Prudence.

The Prime Minister has begun a not-very-secret relationship with a notorious boom and busty blonde called Plenty O'Money, a former consort of the Conservative Party.

Despite years of pretending to be a loyal and upright family savings man, with his four-letter catchphrase "Fife", Gordon now stands revealed as a profligate, two-timing, reckless, shameless, spendthrift *(cont. p. 94)*

GLENDA SLAGG

Yes, it's strictly come slagging!

■ **CHEFS' HATS OFF to Gordon Ramsay!!!! Ok, so the foul-mouthed philanderer of the kitchen has been caught with his trousers down!?! Good luck to him!??! Why shouldn't a top celebrity chef enjoy a bit of off-menu cookie-nookie now and then, just 'cos he's married with a family??!! Honestly, Mr Prude, we're not living in the Middle Ages for Heaven's sake!!?!**

■ GORDON RAMSAY???! Doesn't it make you sick??! And no, it's not the food I'm talkin' about, stoopid!!?! It's the so-called Mr Family Man bunkin' off from his Ritzy restaurant to go a-whiskin' and a-friskin' with his lady friend whilst his poor missus sits at home, bringing up the kiddies!!?! What a five-star disgrace!!! I've got an F-word for you, Gordon – F Off!!!? Talk about Gordon Bleu!!!?? Geddit???!

■ *So the chequered flag has come down on the marriage of billionaire dwarf Bernie Ecclestone and his giant missus??!?? Who cares???!!*

■ *So they've called "It's a wrap" on the marriage of Mockney Movie Moghul Guy Ritchie and his mad missus, Madonna??!?? Who cares???!* (You should. That's what I'm paying you for. Ed.)

■ *So they finally got rid of John Sergeant!!!? Who cares???* (You're fired. Ed.)

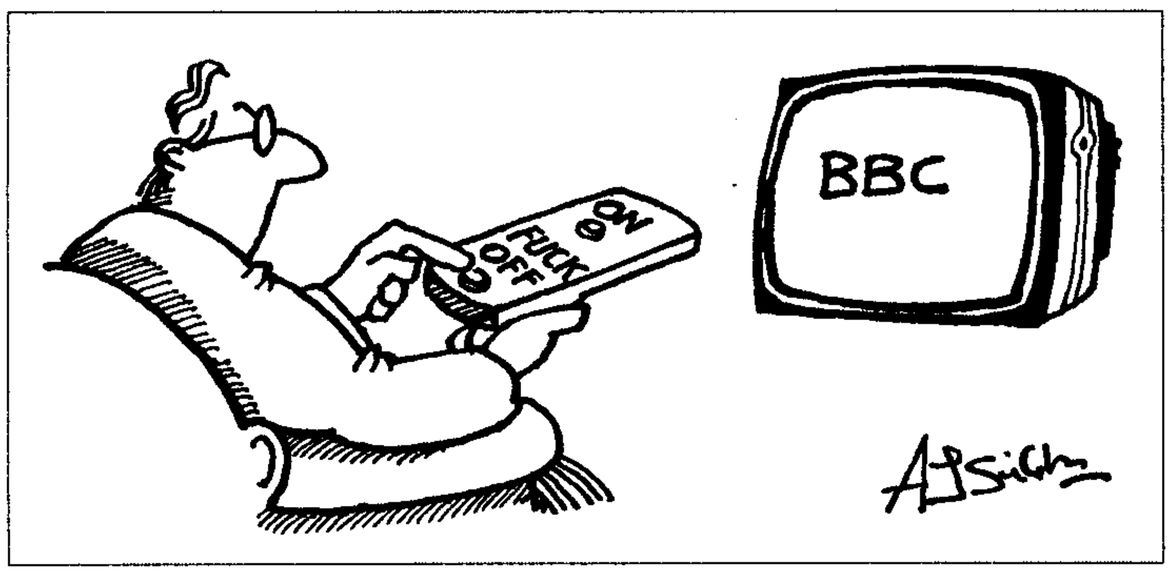
■ HERE THEY ARE – Glenda's Advent Calendar Cavalieros!?!

● **Paul Dacre.** The Champion of Press Freedom?! Mmmm, feel free to press me any day!!! You're all Mail??!?? (Geddit???)

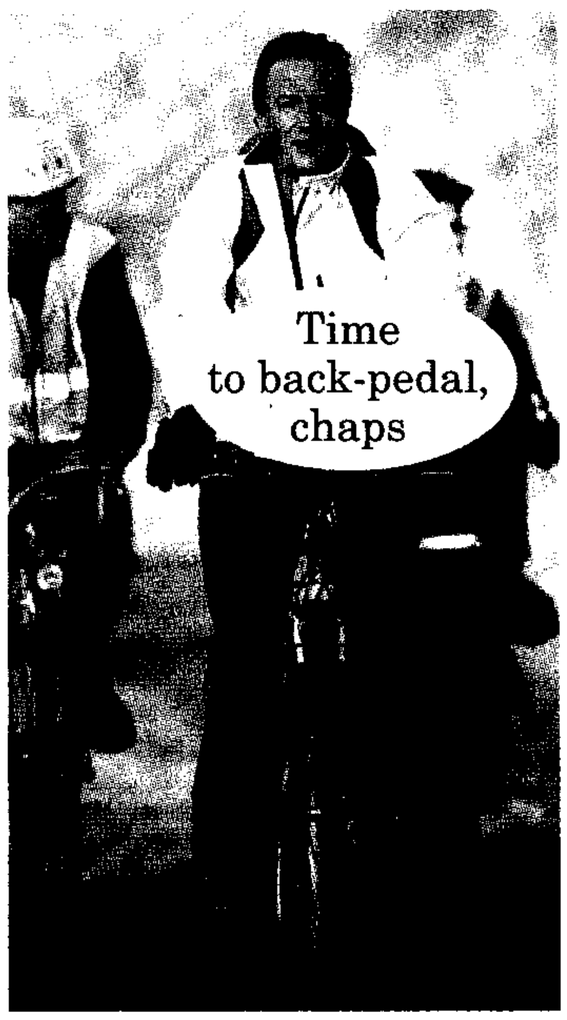
● **Brian Paddick.** The gay copper who wanted to be Mayor of London – now he's on "I'm A Celebrity"!?! What an arse???! And now I've seen it!!??! Mmmmm.

● **Rolf Harris.** So you've made "Two Little Boys" again!?!!?!! How about making one little girl and don't forget your didgeridoo!!????!!

Byeee!!



TORY U-TURN



That Gordon Ramsay 'Slapper-Up' Menu in Full

Welsh Rarebit on the Side

– ❋ –

Legover of Pork

– ❋ –

Crispy Fuck on a Bed of Cheap Hotel

– ❋ –

Spotted Dick

(by News of the World)

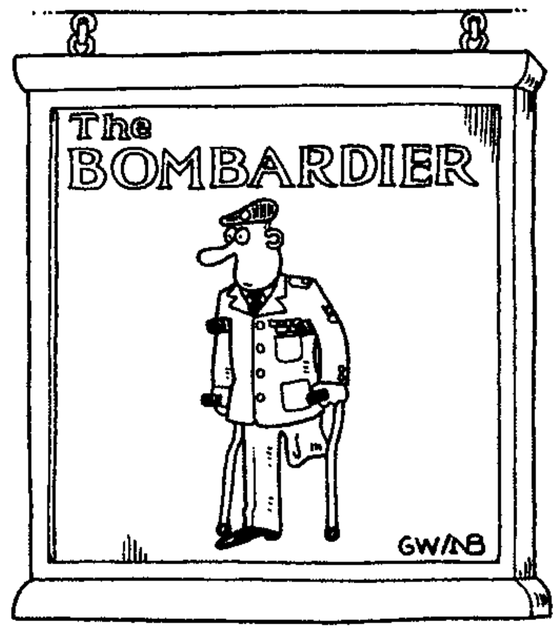
– ❋ –

To drink: *Plonker*

(That's enough menu, Ed.)

You too can make Gordon's Xmas Recipe for Disaster by logging on to Gordon@howaboutaquickFWord.co.fuk

MODERN INN SIGNS



CONRAD BLACK'S PLEA FOR A PARDON

What George Bush Won't Read (Because He Can't)

Dear Mr President,

I believe it was Talleyrand who first expressed the view that an innocent imprisoned man was, in the words of Montaigne, like a multi-plumed, exotic songbird trapped in a cruel iron cage, an allegory that is singularly apposite in my own case, which is that of the most unjust incarceration in the history of United States jurisprudence and wherewithal I solemnly submit (continued for 94 years in jail)

Those New High Street Stores This Christmas

- ☆ **Woolworthess**
- ☆ **Marks & Spent**
- ☆ **Nexttogobust**
- ☆ **Flop Shop**
- ☆ **Sub-Primark**

(Yes, we've got the idea. Ed.)

LATE WOOLWORTHS NEWS

LOYAL shoplifters were last night bemoaning the possible disappearance of Woolworths from our high streets, as negotiations over the sale of its shops continue.

"I remember coming here as a lad when my mother was shoplifting something special for me for Christmas," said one distraught, furtive-looking man, emptying the entire contents of the pick-and-mix and a Black & Decker drill into his over-sized jacket. "And now I'm one of the most regular shoplifters this store has.

"To think that my grandchild won't be able to shoplift here brings a tear to my eye."

"Well, yes, I would like a nice time, but first you'll have to answer this questionnaire:

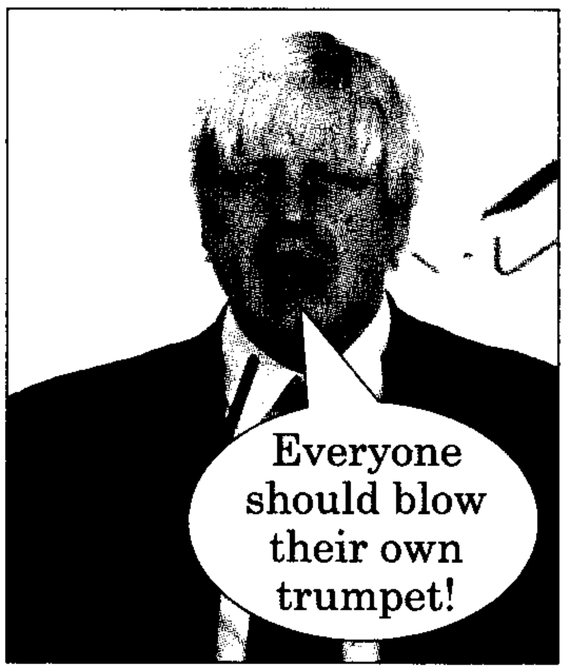
1. Are you working alone?

2. Are you happy in your work?

3. Have you had a medical check-up?

4. Do you take drugs or smoke?"

BORIS PLAN FOR MUSICAL EDUCATION



WORLD IN SHOCK AS SERGEANT BOWS OUT

by Our Entire Staff
Phil Pages

AS THE world economy went into meltdown, Britain's social services collapsed and pirates roamed unchecked on the high seas, only one question was on the mind of millions of people across the globe.

Should John Sergeant have walked away from Strictly Come Dancing leaving his billions of fans shocked and stunned.

Yesterday world leaders were queuing up to pay heartfelt tributes to the man they are calling simply "Strictly John Sergeant".

President-elect Barack Obama described Sergeant as "a grievous loss to the televised ballroom dancing community."

St John of the Cross Judges

His Holiness Pope Benedict called Mr Sergeant "a saintly figure who has enriched the spiritual lives of human beings everywhere. He will be always remembered as "the Lord of the Dance".

From South Africa Nelson Mandela was quick to add his own message. "We must all mourn the departure of this brave and heroic champion of bad dancing. He represented the will of the people against a tiny self-appointed elite, and this insult to democracy makes us very sad."

Meanwhile, from his cave in Bora Bora, Al Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden congratulated Mr Sergeant for turning his back on "the decadent and degrading rituals of Western dancing, which present half-naked women lusted after by shameless infidel audiences."

Carry On Sergeant

In Britain, where old age pensioners wept openly in the street at the news of Sergeant's departure, toddlers left cellophane-wrapped floral tributes outside the BBC TV Centre.

One message read simply, "John, but not forgotten". Another said, "You were the People's Dancer".

A third read, "Come back Jonathan Ross and Russell Brand, you are always in our hearts."

A book of condolence was last night opened at Buckingham Palace, although the Queen has been criticised for not signing it and failing to make a public statement.

However, prime minister Gordon Brown, Tory leader David Cameron and Lord Mandelson were the first to put their names in the book, and there are already plans to erect a permanent memorial to Mr Sergeant on the vacant plinth in Trafalgar Square.

There will be a service of thanksgiving for the life and achievements of Sir John Sergeant in Westminster Abbey, where John's colleagues on the show, led by Miss Cherie Lunghi, will perform a specially-choreographed selection of tangoes, rumbas and cha-chas to the music of Verdi's Requiem.

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam
Reg Varney: actor

So. Farewell Then
Reg Varney.

Star of long-running sitcom
Classic, On.
The Buses

Now your bus has reached
Its terminus
I wonder – is there room
For "one more upstairs"?

E.J. Thribb (17B –Night Bus only)

Also In Memoriam
Jack Scott: weather forecaster

So. Farewell Then
Jack Scott.
You were the first professional

TV weatherman.
You placed magnetic symbols
Of clouds, sun and rain

On a board
And then quite often
They fell off.

Now the sun has gone in
And there is widespread depression
Across the country

E.J. Thribb (17½ ° F)

In Memoriam Too
The Yugo: the Yugoslav 'People's Car' which has ceased production

So. Farewell Then
The Yugo.
For 40 years

You were to motoring
What John Sergeant
Was to dancing.

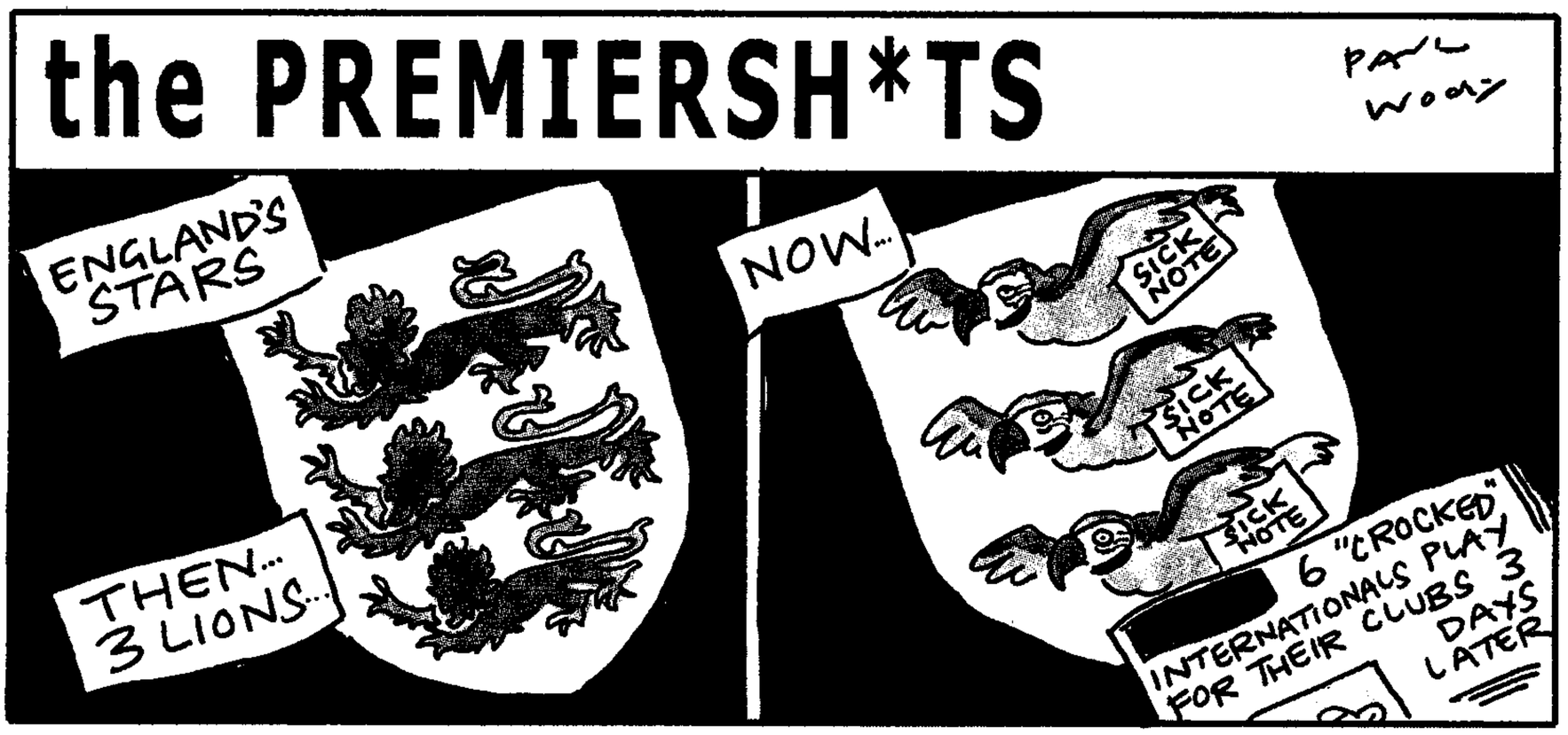
But now,
Like him,
Yugone.

E.J. Thribb (17½ gallons to the mile)

P.S.
Just like On
The Buses

You wait ages for
A valedictory poem

And then three
Come along at
Once



The Daily Bush Telegraph

Friday, November 28, 2008

Horrendous Ordeal For Celebrity Insects

by Our Showbiz Staff **Ant Dec**

YES, it's that time of year again when a select group of bugs head off into the jungle to try and revive their flagging careers on "I'm an Invertebrate, Get Me Out of Here".

And this time it's worse than ever. The hapless collection of D-list cockroaches and has-been spiders have been obliged to endure the worst trial the organisers have ever come up with: **Being Put in a Tank with Robert Kilroy-Silk.**

"It was disgusting," said former maggot Blue Bottle, "he was shiny and creepy and had disgusting views and I just couldn't bear it." She said, "I was only too happy to get out alive. Still at least it wasn't Esther Rantzen."

(continued for 9 weeks)

POLLY FILLER'S

Guide To Beating The Credit Crunch

1. Don't throw anything away.
2. Recycle everything.
3. Particularly old columns. They may be a bit dated, but with a bit of touching up they look as good as new.
4. So. Dig out that old piece about the credit crunch from the bottom of the drawer, dust it off and use it again.
5. Think of all the time you've saved which you can now spend more profitably – going through your clippings file to see if there are any other old pieces that can be reused.
6. Oh! Here's one called *"Polly Filler on Life Begins at Thrifty (1992)"*.
7. "When you go into a shop, don't buy the most expensive items, look for the cheaper ones."
8. Brilliant! Cut and paste! Sorted!
9. Can I have my cheque, please?
10. Thank you very much. Gotta dash. I'm off to the Maldives.

© *Polly Filler 2008.*

It's time for this self-important idiot to put a sock in it

Writes Sir Max Hastings
(Journalist of the Year 1971)

SCARCELY A day goes by without the future king of England giving us his views on pretty well every subject under the sun.

We hear him droning on about GM crops, alternative medicine, the Prayer Book, windfarms and modern architecture.

Why should we listen to a man who clearly knows nothing about any of the subjects he is sounding off about, and who is obviously just making it up as he goes along.

(Is this enough yet? – MH).

(No, another 800 words please – PD).

Anyone would think that rather than being heir to the throne he was actually a highly paid newspaper columnist.

(Will this do? – MH).

(No. You're fired – PD).

Advertisement

Enjoy the cruise of a lifetime on the SS Gnomonia

GNOME HOLIDAY OFFER

SPEND 3 days cruising down the Red Sea in the world's most luxurious oil tanker and then spend 6 months on shore in a typical African village enjoying the world famous hospitality of the Somali ransom-seeking community. Says one satisfied customer, "I thought I was going to die"

Book now to avoid disappointment!

Dave Snooty AND HIS PALS

NO-ONE LIKES US ANY MORE, DAVE!
WHY? WE HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING!?!
ER... THAT'S THE PROBLEM!
POPULARITY CONTEST
DAVE
IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT OSBO! YOU'RE MEANT TO HAVE A PLAN TO HELP THOSE IN TROUBLE!
THE POOR AND OIKY?
NO - US!!!
KICK!
WE'LL HAVE TO DO A U-TURN
WELL IT'S BETTER THAN A NON-U TURN, DONTCHAKNOW!?!
MATCH GORDON'S TARGETS
CUT SPENDING!
CUT TAXES!
CUT- GLASS ACCENT!
WHAT A STUPID CUT EH, READERS!?!

The Eye says

Baby P – A Scene From Hell

THE story of Baby P is one which has rightly shocked the nation to its core. The details of the short and tragic life of the this innocent toddler are so shocking and so depraved that few readers could possibly want to dwell on them in any detail. That is why we have decided to devote 48 pages to this horrifying story every day this week.

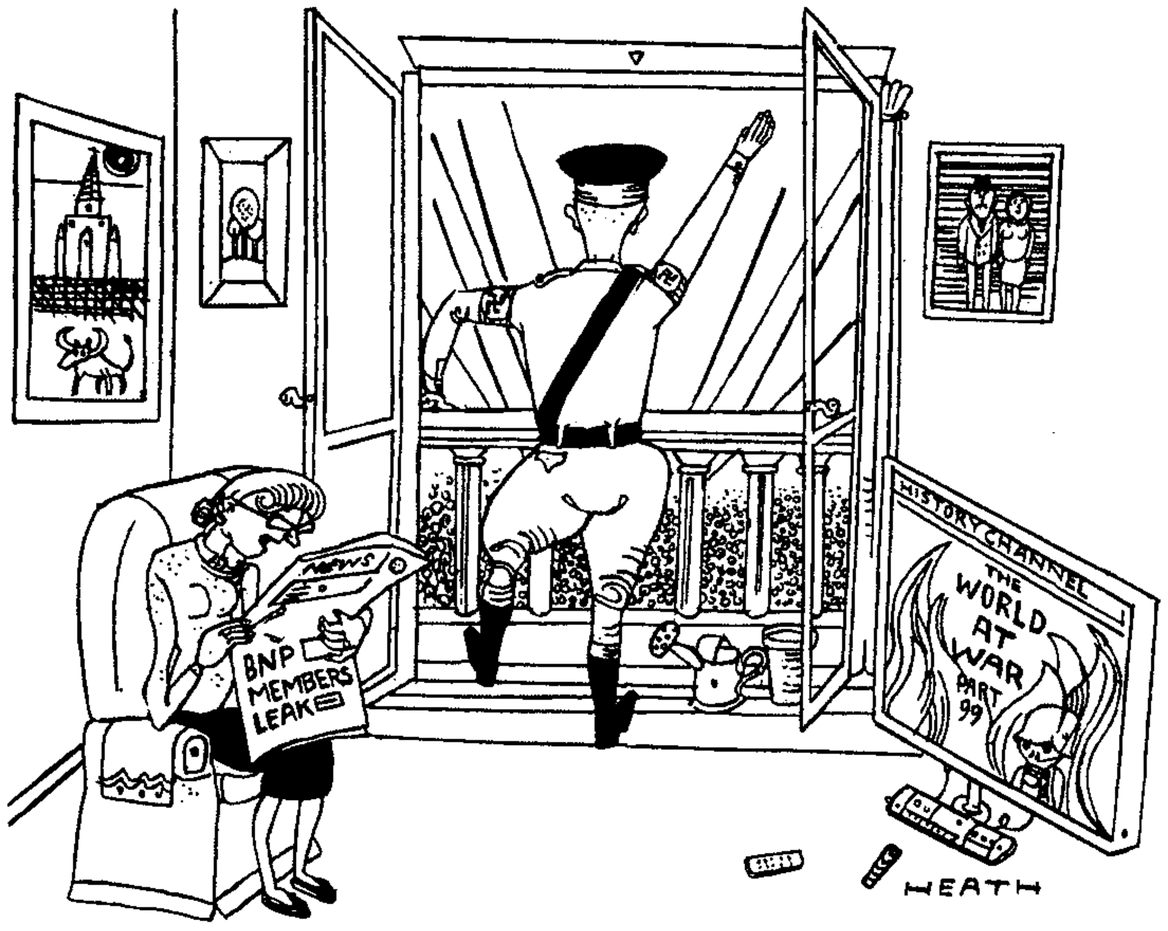
PLUS: Baby P – The Pictures That Are Too Shocking To Print, pages 48-96.

The Sun Says

Baby P – A Scene From Hell

THE tragic and shocking case of Baby P has revealed to a horrified nation what sickening abuse can be meted out by cruel, sadistic bullies.

So, it's only right that in response to this we demand that all the social workers, council officials and doctors involved in the case are named, shamed and then beaten to death. *(Is this right? Ed.)*



"Darling, you didn't tell me you were a member of the BNP"

The Beatlitudes of Pope Benedict the 94th

1. Hi there, Pope pickers.

2. Blessed is John Lennon, for he shall be forgiven for claiming to be more famous than Jesus.

3. Blessed are the Beatles for their music is very popular with young people.

4. Blessed are the record makers for they shall add to the sum of human happiness in a real sense.

5. And now, let us sing Hymn No.1 (up six places from last week's No.7): All You Need is Love © God.

EXCLUSIVE TO PRIVATE EYE

THAT BNP LIST IN FULL

The shocking names the press is too scared to publish

KNACKER, Inspector PFI. 999 Acacia Avenue, London SW19.
Occupation Senior member of Thames Regional Porn Squad.
Recreations Judo, small arms and engaging in Masonic rituals with other members of the force.

GUSSETT, Reginald. The Berghof, Berchtesgaden Suburb, Beds.
Occupation Archivist and local historian, publications include *Highways and Byways of Victorian Bedfordshire* and *Why Enoch Was Right*.
Recreations Researching the Gussett family tree and English representative of the Klu Klux Klan.

PUGG, Dave. 106a Churchill Drive, Billericay, Essex.
Occupation Night club bouncer.
Recreations Supporting Millwall FC and Secretary of The Den "Keep Racism In Football" Campaign.

VAN HOOGSTRATEN, Major Vernon. The Bursary, St Cake's School, Solihill, W. Midlands.
Occupation School bursar and head of rifle shooting at well-known West Midlands independent public school (Motto: Strength through joy).
Recreations Weightlifting and researching the history of torture.

SNOZZER, Ronnie. 17 Mosley Crescent, London E17.
Occupation Black cab driver (the cab, not Mr Snozzer!). Gatwick £40. Phone 071974 351351.
Recreations Phoning Talk Radio to agree with views of Mr John Gaunt on all subjects and "dogging".

WILMOT, Dawn. Flat C, 117 The Franco Estate, Mussolini Road, Streatham.
Occupation Proprietor of hairdressing saloon "Hair Hitler" in Peckham High Street.

Recreations Giving "Third Reiki Massage" and microwave cooking.

ROUGH TROUSER, Rev Oliver. The Order of Sodomites Retirement Home, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk.
Occupation Retired Clerk-in-holy-orders.
Recreations Mediaeval vestments and the young male nude in art history.
(That's enough Fascists, Ed)

GRIFFIN LASHES OUT AT BNP LIST SHOCK

OBERSTURMFUEHRER Nick "Goebbels" Griffin, leader of the British National Party, today welcomed the publication of the list, saying that it showed how the media stereotype of BNP members as "goose-stepping, jack-booted, swivel-eyed lunatics" was completely wrong.

"As the list demonstrates," he said, "the BNP membership is made up of a thoroughly respectable cross-section of decent British goose-stepping, jack-booted, swivel-eyed lunatics."

NEW CHRISTMAS MUSICAL

My Fair Laddy

Based on the play by George Osborne Bernard Shaw

Classic riches to rags tale of how a poor little rich boy from the West End of London is befriended by a Professor of Linguistics, Enry Iggins who takes young George under his wing and teaches him how not to talk posh.

As the story begins we see little George in his top hat being scorned by everyone for talking in a lah-di-dah voice.

But the Professor promises that he will transform George's fortunes by teaching him Estuary English in only three months – and furthermore that he will pass him off as a member of the Labour Party at their conference.

Timeless family entertainment

Songs include

I'm Not Getting Elected In The Morning

♪ ***I Could Have Made A Speech All Night***

I Know The Street Where You Live (arranged by Felix Mandelson) ♫♪

With A Little Bit Of Luck (I Won't Be Sacked)

In 'Ertford, 'Ereford And 'Ampshire There Must Be A Lot Of Votes To Be Won

Get Me To The Churchill Room On Time ♪

I've Grown Accustomed To My Silly Face

♫ ***Couldn't It Be Bubberly?***

CAST IN FULL

PROFESSOR HIGGINS..... Sir Stephen Fry
GEORGE OSBORNE.....Russell Brand
DOLITTLE..... John Prescott

Lives of the Saints and Martyrs No. 94

St Charles of Moore

AND IN those times there was a holy man, a scribe named Charles, who shunned the wickedness of the world and shut himself away in a rustic cell to write about the life and miracles of the Blessed Margaret of Thatcher.

And Charles was sorely vexed by the visions on his television, and he saw the devil in the shape of Jonathan Ross. And Charles waxed wroth that he should have to pay to witness these blasphemies.

So he declared to the authorities that he would render no tribute to the BBC, but would rather be chained, bound and incarcerated for his beliefs.

And there were many simple folk who followed his example, saying that they too did not want to pay up.

But the BBC took no notice, thinking that Charles would eventually go away and everyone would forget all about him.

And they were not wrong.

THOSE BBC MEASURES IN THE WAKE OF 'SACHS-GATE" IN FULL

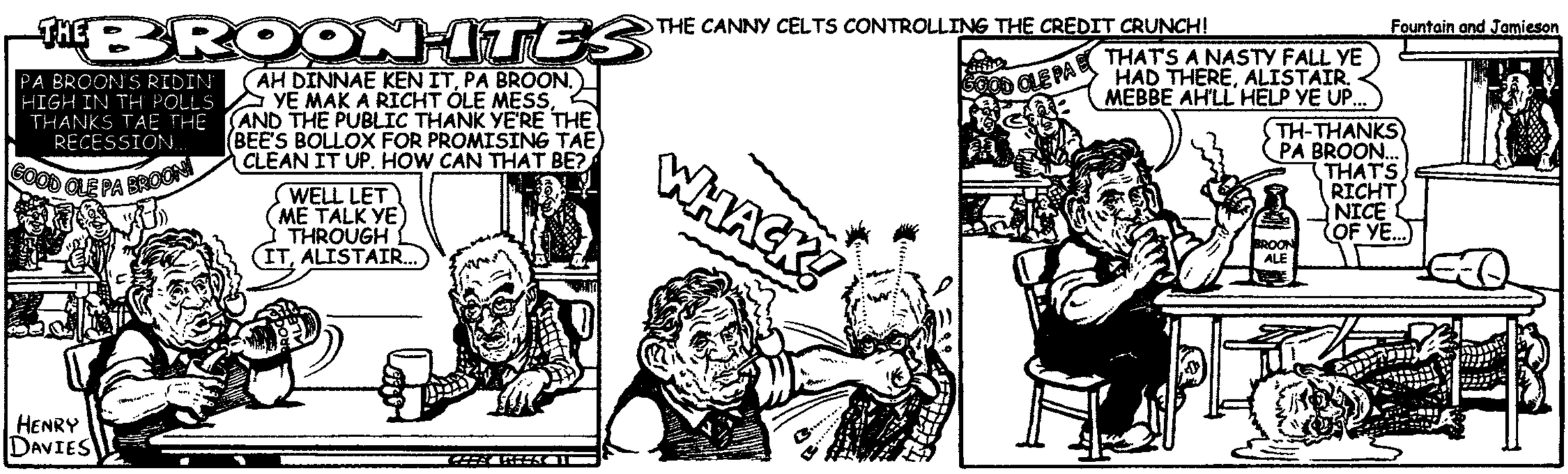
Alistair Haircut
The former senior marketing executive with Sky has been recruited to head a six strong "Stop Presenters Insulting Sitcom Pensioners By Saying They've F***ed Their Granddaughters" monitoring department, on a salary of £320,000 a year.

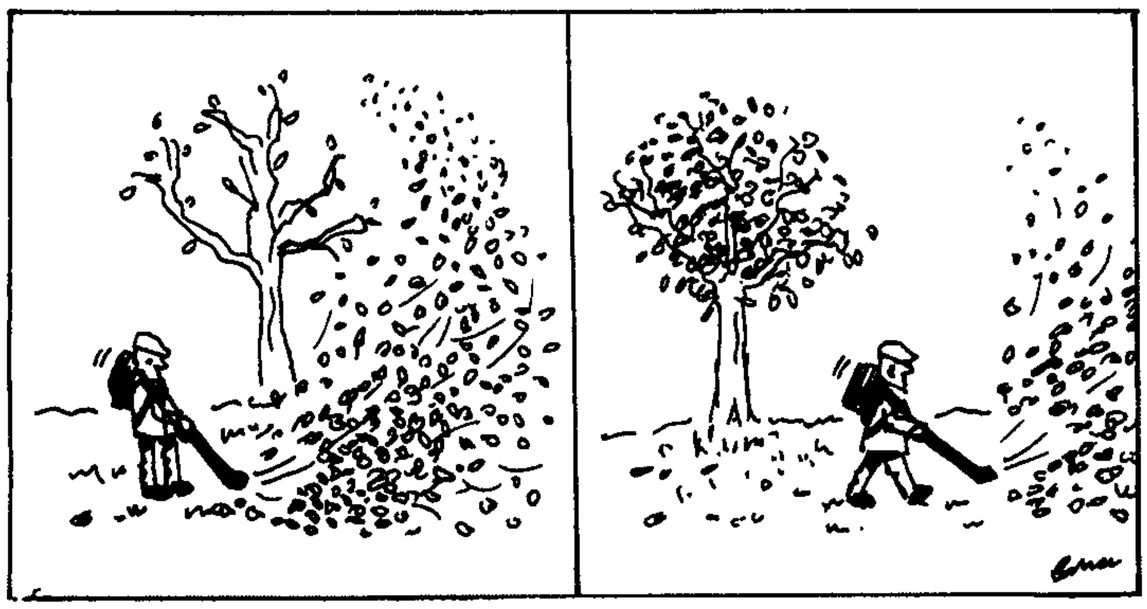
Toby Trendy
The former head of stolen formats at ITV has been recruited to head a twelve-strong "Monitoring The Monitoring Department Department" to monitor the effectiveness of the internal monitoring. Toby will report directly to Alistair Haircut on a salary of £285,000 a year.

Bruce Juice
The former Head of Paperclips at Channel 5 will have a floating role, both monitoring the monitor's monitoring and monitoring what monitoring of broadcasts needs monitoring on a salary of £275,000 a year.

Brian de Rivative
The former head of mergers and acquisitions at Lehman Brothers will head a twelve-strong team developing an internal framework to allow the establishment of numerous internal monitoring departments to monitor the internal monitoring departments on a salary of £567,000 a year.

James Beancounter
The former head of Jam Sponges with Unilever will report directly to the Director General about how many fresh layers of bureaucracy will be required to stop Jonathan Ross ringing up Andrew Sachs to tell him that Russell Brand "f***ed his granddaughter" on a salary of £8000,000 a year.


THE BROONITES
THE CANNY CELTS CONTROLLING THE CREDIT CRUNCH!
Fountain and Jamieson
PA BROON'S RIDIN' HIGH IN TH' POLLS THANKS TAE THE RECESSION...
GOOD OLE PA BROON!
AH DINNAE KEN IT, PA BROON. YE MAK A RICHT OLE MESS, AND THE PUBLIC THANK YE'RE THE BEE'S BOLLOX FOR PROMISING TAE CLEAN IT UP. HOW CAN THAT BE?
WELL LET ME TALK YE THROUGH IT, ALISTAIR...
HENRY DAVIES
WHACK!
GOOD OLE PA B
THAT'S A NASTY FALL YE HAD THERE, ALISTAIR. MEBBE AH'LL HELP YE UP...
TH-THANKS PA BROON... THAT'S RICHT NICE OF YE...
BROON ALE



EXCLUSIVE TO ALL TORY PAPERS

An Apology

IN RECENT months and years we have attacked Gordon Brown's govemment for constantly hitting the middle classes with a seemingly never-ending raft of punishing tax rises – tax rises which prove that Labour is totally incapable of understanding that it's only tax cuts that stimulate economic activity and increase prosperity for us all in the long term.

We now realise, in the light of Labour announcing far-reaching tax cuts to stimulate economic activity, that nothing could be further from the truth, and that Labour 's uncosted tax cuts prove that this govemment is totally incapable of understanding that tax cuts now will only lead to massive tax hikes in the future which will decimate the economy in the long term.

'THE OSBORNE' IN FREEFALL

By Our Westminster Correspondent
Steven Pound

THE CONSERVATIVE party have denied acting irresponsibly by 'talking up' the drastic shortcomings of the Shadow Chancellor, after yet another massive fall in the value of 'the Osborne'.

"The weakness of 'the Osborne' is clearly a worldwide phenomenon. There's nothing we can say that can make him any worse," said one Tory grandee.

"As little as six months ago 'the Osborne' was worth almost two Alistair Darlings on the open market," said another Tory grandee, "but in the past six weeks it's been like watching a yacht slowly sink and now 'the Osborne' is all but worthless."

"David Cameron must take decisive action now to calm the Garrick Club by taking measures to prop up the ailing 'Osborne' before it's too late."

LATE TORY NEWS

DAVID Cameron has announced that the Conservatives are dropping their pledge to replace Labour as the party of government for 2010/11.

"Clearly that pledge belonged to another time," said the shiny smooth-faced leader of the opposition.

"Given the downturn both in the economy and our opinion poll ratings, it would be irresponsible for us to keep making promises like this that we simply won't be able to keep."

New picture for Imperial War Museum

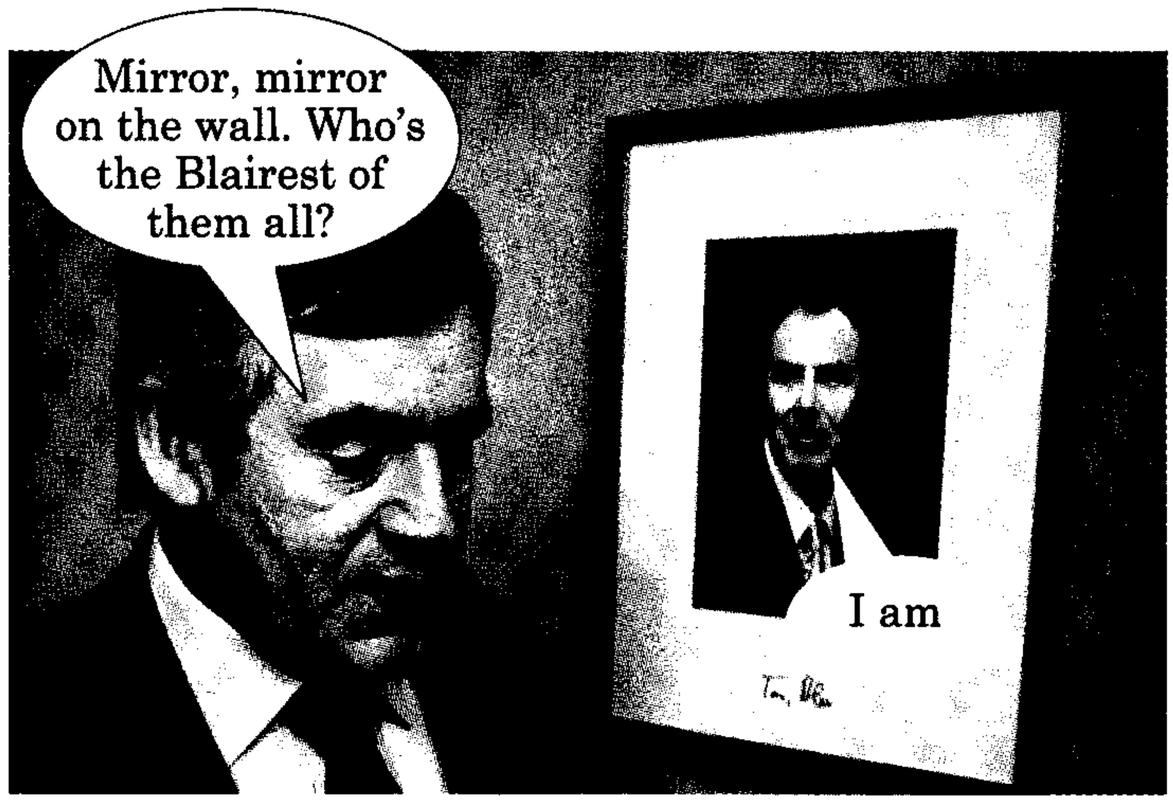
A MOVING painting of world leaders blindly stumbling forward into a global disaster, 'Gasbags' by Sir John Dancer Sergeant, has been acquired by Britain's Imperial War Museum.

Brian Sewell writes:

"With their bowed heads and downward gaze, these tragic figures convey a mood of impending despair. At the rear the Frenchman clings desperately to his British ally who himself has no idea which direction he is going. Is there a sadder image in all (cont. p94)

CHRISTMAS PANTO

'Snow Brown and the G7 Dwarfs'



CLINTSTONES - THE PREHISTORIC FIRST FAMILY
Yes! They are back yet again!
Secretary of State? But don't I have to be abroad all the time?
That's the idea!!
Bill is going to be happy anyway !
I'm going to be in charge of Iraq and Afghanistan!
Obama's no fool is he! Still at least this time I won't...
...be sleeping with the Secretary!
YABADABBADOBAMA!!!

DIARY

THE RT HON GORDON BROWN MP: It would be grossly irresponsible during these difficult times for the international community to overdo the expenditure on frivolous enjoyment this season. In my own family, we will be giving each other energy-saving lightbulbs for Christmas. We then plan to devote the day to reviving that marvellous old game of "scissors-paper-stone". This will help save on electricity – it's best played by candlelight – and let us do our bit to save our planet's precious resources. May I take this opportunity to wish all those in the national and international community a thrifty new year?

VICTORIA BECKHAM: It's so easy to forget you don't have to wear high-profile designer clothes all the time. There's no law against wearing like just a simple T-shirt and jeans around the house. Stella McCartney does some great ones and if you're really feeling the pinch so does Donna (Koran). Sometimes when I'm just slobbing around the house, I just throw on the first thing I see, it doesn't have to be the absolute latest. Yesterday, it was an Alexander McQueen, which was way over a month old but no-one complained.

Shop around. If you don't see exactly what you want, then get them to design it for you, it might cost that little bit more but in the long run it costs less because the more you spend now the less you'll have to spend later, unless you really want to.

HRH PRINCE CHARLES: It all boils down to asking yourself one very simple question: "Frankly, do I really NEED this?" It worries me tremendously that all over the world people aren't asking themselves this vital thing. Just the other day, I flew to the Gambia on an official trip and I came across some perfectly ordinary people in the street. They were waiting beside a "bus-stop", which is the place they hail their buses. Apparently, they work out where the buses stop each day and then put these "bus-stop" signs there. Absolutely ingenious, well done. So I approached them and asked them whether they had asked themselves the simple question: "Frankly, do I really NEED this bus?" I mean, buses take up a tremendous amount of fuel, and that's a precious resource we simply can't afford to lose. It's so much better to walk, if one can. For instance, I always make an absolute point of walking around my garden at Highgrove, I find it so much more natural than asking one's staff to carry one round in the sedan

TOP TIPS FOR THE CREDIT CRUNCH

chair. On the other hand, there's a crying need, particularly in urban areas, for the introduction of a decent system of sedans. Only the other day, I was in Burnley, and I said to the Mayor, who's desperately thinking of ways to regenerate his inner city, but why ON EARTH isn't there a decent and above all sustainable sedan service instead of all these wretched cars and buses with their ghastly emissions? The good old sedan is simply marvellous for the environment, and marvellous for employment too. What I always say is it only takes a little imagination.

BONO: Barack Obama? Hey, the guy rocks, he's a very good friend of ours, and I say that as a representative of all humanity. Last time Bam and I rapped together – good craic! – I went down on my knees, metaphorically, and begged him to help me save this great big beautiful world. Personally, I cut back on overspending by the transference of all my major investment outgoings into an offshore property portfolio. Okay, so it might take you a tiny weeny bit of effort, guys, but believe me there are millions and millions of people out there who stand to benefit from just one man doing his bit for the economy, and, I beg you, let's never ever forget the spiritual dimension of a robust portfolio, my friend.

MICHAEL WINNER: As most of you will know, my latest movie, which deals with the issue of rape, murder and revenge on a tropical paradise, is currently in production on the Isle of Man. Cutting production costs? No problem at all, I don't know why all those stupid people whine on about it. It's simple: instead of ten different actresses being raped by ten different actors we're having one actress in a variety of wigs being raped by one actor ten times over. And we've scaled back on the sets and the props with no loss of interest. The ballroom of a stately home is now the backroom of a village hall, and the villain's high-speed powerboat is now a lilo, which makes it much more interesting. And anyway, once our gorgeous young actress, my very dear friend Jordan, has taken off her top, you certainly won't be looking at the interior design, not unless you're one of our friends in the limp-wristed brigade, darling!

PAUL BURRELL: I'll never forget the time Her Majesty the Queen, bless, told me I knew more about beating the credit crunch than literally anyone else in the world. We were sharing a bath at the time, purely to cut back on water consumption, you understand. I let Her Majesty get out first, and she towelled herself down, then I got out and used the same towel, so's to save on the laundry. And I still follow a lot of the money-saving tips passed on to me by the late Princess Diana. For instance, if you're thinking of writing your autobiography, then be sure to use the same material for your next three autobiographies. You only need to make some alterations here and there and no-one will notice.

MOHAMED AL FAYED: Harrods full of lovely fuckin bargains all spilling out everywhere to getting your hands on, you no believe me, you just try ask my lovely young ladies on cosmetic counters, heh heh. Our Harrods motto, my friend? Never Knowingly Underage, heh heh. Other top tips, I say tips, heh heh, from Your Uncle Mohamed? Never waste your money on buyin up so-called Royal Fuckin Family they skatecheaps who spend their days killing innocent fuckin people, is Wills and Harry I feel sorry for, I old man who just want make people happy, you come upstairs to pentyhouse, I like you, I putting you in movies.

RT HON DAVID CAMERON MP: I'm not going to look you in the face and claim my party's got all the solutions to the credit crunch. Far from it. But what I will say to you is this. We have developed one big idea and it works. 1) Bicycle tyres are costly, and use up precious air and rubber we can ill-afford to waste. 2) So remove the wheels and the pedals from your bicycle. 3) By all means sit on your bike but run along the road using both feet. 4) I'm not going to lie to you: it may take that little bit longer, but it's great exercise. And once again, it all goes to show that ours is the only party with the big ideas.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

LOOK WHAT TERRY WOGAN'S SENT YOU, DAD. "BANDAGED", AN ALBUM OF CHILDREN'S SONGS BY RADIO 2 PRESENTERS AND FRIENDS FOR CHILDREN IN NEED...
IT'S GOT ALL THE OLD CLASSIC FAVOURITES ON IT; "LITTLE DRUMMER BOY"/"PEACE ON EARTH" PERFORMED BY WOGAN AND ALED JONES...
REALLY?
"PUFF THE MAGIC DRAGON", "UGLY BUG BALL"...."TWINKLE TWINKLE LITTLE STAR" BY EAMONN HOLMES AND RUTH LANGFORD...
AND "GRANDAD" BY RUSSELL BRAND AND JONATHAN ROSS?

Literary Review

Labour's luvvie lost

Gethsemane
David Hare
(Faber, £9.99)

APART from Shakespeare, the dramatist most regularly staged by the National Theatre of Great Britain in modern times is Sir David Hare. *Gethsemane*, just opened at the Cottesloe with the script immediately available from Fabber for anyone desperate to experience the evening in a second form as well, is the 14th of his pieces to be staged there.

Of these, the vast majority have worried away at the same subject: contemporary politics and, in particular, the way in which governments inevitably fail to live up to the high integrity and ideals of left-wing playwrights living in big houses in Hampstead.

In the early 90s, there was a trilogy showing vicars, lawyers and politicians becoming disillusioned at the end of the Thatcher/Major years. *Gethsemane* completes a second trilogy, following *The Permanent Way* and *Stuff Happens* in depicting how New Labour has also let Sir David down.

There's an old American expression: "Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me." And it could be argued that Hare might have written a more interesting variety of plays if he had not kept naively expecting so much from elected officials (for good measure, his first ever NT play, *Plenty*, showed a woman being let down by the Labour government after the Second World War.)

Gethsemane, anyway, follows the usual pattern of a Hare political drama. People keep coming to the front of the stage and delivering ponderous monologues about the state of Britain. These are interspersed with dialogues in swanky locations.

A saintly but quietly sexy woman – Lori Drysdale – is a teacher who has thrown in her job to become a busker on the London Underground because Blairite educational policy required her to fill in forms and meet targets rather than shape the minds of future generations.

But, because Sir David doesn't in the end really want to write plays about ex-teachers who sing Penny Lane at Leicester Square, Lori luckily happens to be married to Paul, who is employed as a political lobbyist by Otto Fallon, an oily, arrogant Jew who used to work in the music business but now raises funds for the New Labour government of Alec Beasley, a young and charismatic prime minister who goes to church a lot and relaxes by playing drums.

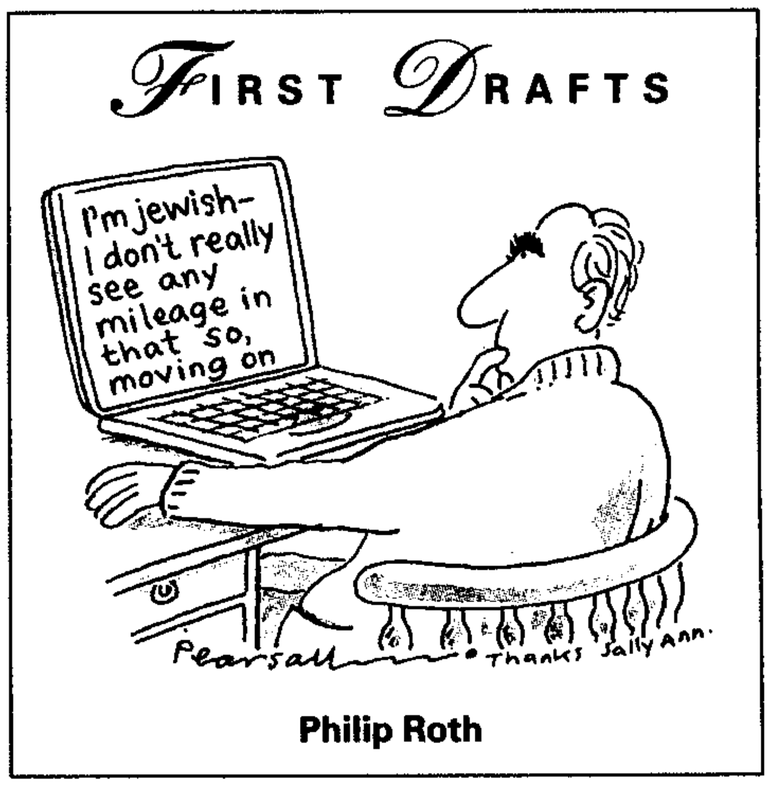
Beasley once inspired hope in Lori and Paul and others but threw it all away by invading Iraq. Oh, and even more luckily for a playwright hoping to combine the public and the private, Lori, in her teaching days, was the beloved mentor of Suzette Guest, the daughter of the Labour home secretary, who has two problems: one is that her daughter has been caught taking drugs; the other is that her husband is about to go on trial abroad for financial misdealings.

There aren't a lot of laughs in late Hare but there's a woofer on the first page of the published script. Sir Dave solemnly explains that, whereas *The Permanent Way* and *Stuff Happens* featured real people (Bush, Blair, Prescott) speaking some words verbatim, *Gethsemane* is "pure fiction."

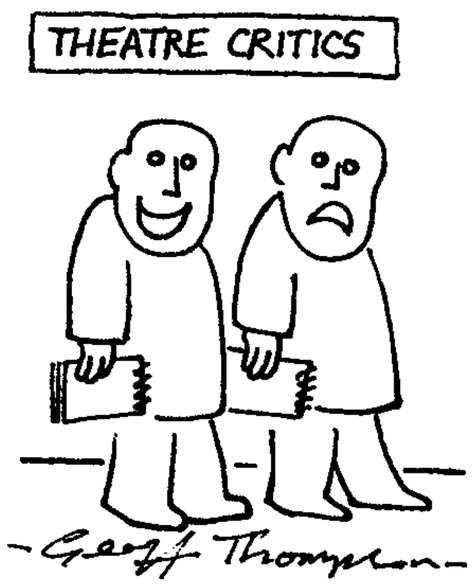
Well, silly us. So the slippery fixer isn't Lord Levy and the minister with the money-troubled hubby and the druggie kid isn't a lazy and prurient amalgam of Tessa Jowell and Jack Straw. Sir David would doubtless complain that to make such connections is "journalistic", which, for him, is about as low as a person can get. Inevitably, the characters in *Gethsemane* include a hack who moralises in his newspaper column about his lovely home-life, while actually raping under-age girls at parties.

Hilariously, the play's main charge against hacks, about from being hypocritical sexual criminals, is that they are too cynical about politicians and refuse to give them the chance to do good. Coming in a play that is itself slickly cynical about public figures – how the Cottesloe crowd roars with smug anti-Blairism when the fictional prime minister reveals that he was "in church this morning" or the home secretary is accused of "killing Arabs" – this seems pretty breath-taking. But then comes Sir Dave's other standard charge against journalists: that they make stuff up.

Actually, if he'd bothered to make some stuff up, instead of half-dramatising old profiles of real New Labour figures, he might have had a better play. Admirers of his smart and funny early work know all about the process of disillusionment.



Philip Roth



Books & Bookmen

■ THE shortlists announced last week for the Costa Awards produce some entertaining clashes, as they pit authors with the same publisher or agent against one another, causing painfully divided loyalties.

There are two Chatto novelists (Sadie Jones and Jenny Rooney) in the first novel group; two Penguin authors (Sathnam Sanghera and Jackie Wullschlager) in biography; and two writers with RCW agents (Chris Cleave and Patrick McGrath) in a novel shortlist that also includes (as a rebuke to underwhelmed reviewers) Louis de Bernières and (as a rebuke, if he wins, to the Booker judges who relegated him to runner-up) Sebastian Barry.

■ PAUL O'GRADY is front-runner in the Christmas celebrity memoir race, with overall sales well over 200,000 and a sizeable lead over rivals including Michael Parkinson, Dawn French, Julie Walters, Alan Carr and Jonathan Ross.

But it's only thanks to a suggestion from Parky that O'Grady wrote the book at all, as emerged during a chummy but curious encounter between the pair on O'Grady's teatime Channel 4 chat show (curious both for a market leader allowing a challenger a plugging chance, and for O'Grady displaying Parky's new favourite-music CD rather than his book on his desk).

In the absence of an O'Grady memoir, a hefty proportion of the northern nostalgia-lovers who bought it would have defected to Parky. He's already too rich to worry about that, but his connections won't be happy: Parkinson and O'Grady are respectively published by imprints of Hachette and Random House, the UK's two biggest publishing groups, and having a Christmas No1 is crucial to morale and bragging rights as well as profitability.

■ THE latest institution feeling the economic squeeze is Christie's books and manuscripts department, to judge by the catalogue for its sale at South Kensington on 13 November.

Lot 294A was a letter from Richard Chopping, designer of dustjackets for the early James Bond novels, thanking one Crispin Jackson for a cheque. Crispin Jackson, as it happens, is the head of Christie's book department, and Chopping was thanking him for selling some items in 2004.

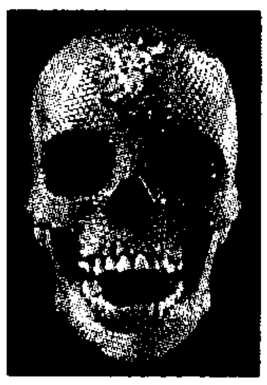
Chopping died in April this year, and the head of department lost no time in putting his dead client's private correspondence up for sale, with an estimated price of £200-£300. Only a tiny dot next to the lot number indicated that the seller was Christie's – or would have done if the firm hadn't omitted from the catalogue any explanation of what the dot meant.

But Jackson and Christie's may still have feared embarrassment. Or did they have a fit of conscience? Either way, on the day of the auction, Lot 294A was suddenly withdrawn from sale.

'Bookworm'

World of Art

ARTFUL DODGER



■ CARTRAIN is a 16-year-old graffiti artist who creates Banksy-style stencils and collages containing such recognisable figures as Mickey Mouse, George W Bush, Clint Eastwood and the Queen, none of whom has ever objected. Damien Hirst is a 43-year-old, Turner prize-winning, world-famous artist whose work *For the Love of God*, a platinum cast of a human skull set with 8,601 diamonds, sold for £50m last year.

Cartrain recently made a series of collages which featured, among other things, photographs of Hirst's sculpture. Some imposed the bejewelled skull over the faces of figures taken from other photographs. One showed it sitting in a shopping basket alongside a bunch of carrots. He displayed them in the online gallery 100 artworks.com, where the average price for one of Cartrain's collages is £65.

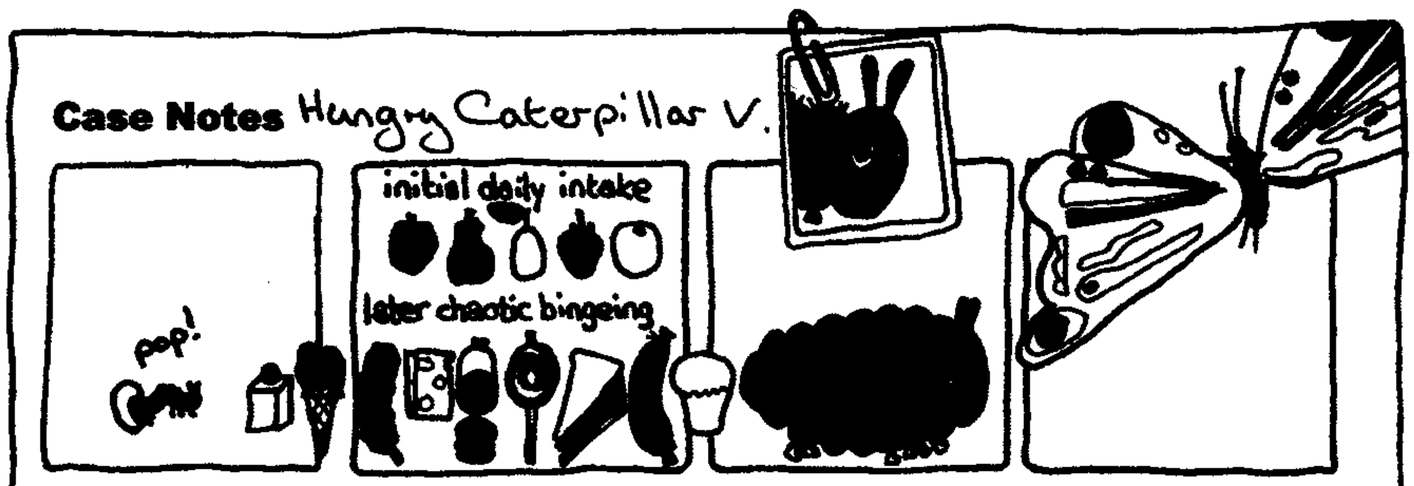
He was contacted by the Design and Artists Copyright Society (DACS), acting on the direct instructions of Hirst, informing him that he had broken the law by infringing Hirst's copyright. Hirst demanded that Cartrain not only remove the works from sale but "deliver up" the originals along with any profit he had made on those that he had already sold, or face legal action.

The DACS, who refused to comment on the matter when contacted by the *Eye*, duly took delivery on Hirst's behalf of four collages by Cartrain on 12 November. They still await the cash the teenager made from sales of his work, which his gallery says is "around £200". Until it arrives, Hirst will have to get by on the £95.7m he made in September in an unprecedented direct auction of his own artworks, held without the involvement of middlemen because he felt that "there's a hell of a lot of money in art – but the artists don't get it".

Critics, meanwhile, see interesting influences in Cartrain's work – including that of *Hymn* by Hirst, who in May 2000 donated an "undisclosed sum" to charity in lieu of his royalties on the £1m sale of the work to Charles Saatchi after toymakers Humbrol objected to the fact it was a direct copy of their Young Scientist Anatomy Set.

Or of the Fermat spiral of circles at fixed divergence of approximately 137° which mathematician Robert Dixon developed, exhibited at the Royal College of Art, and published in his book *Mathographics*, only to find it reproduced with Hirst's name next to it in the *Guardian* several years later (*Eyes* 1086 and 1104).

Or indeed *For the Love of God*, which not only closely resembled a range of skull jewellery sold by Butler and Wilson (*Eye* 1186) but also bore a strong resemblance to works by Hirst's former friend and co-exhibitor John LeKay, who told the *Times* last year: "I would like Damien to acknowledge that 'John really did inspire the skull and influenced my work a lot'. Damien's very insecure about his originality."



Hungry Caterpillar V. was abandoned before birth. He has had no example of family meal times or of structured eating patterns and has allowed his natural appetites to dictate his intake. Exposure to high sugar and processed foods has led to chaotic eating and his calorie intake is increasing daily. Without considerable psychological support **Hungry Caterpillar V.** is unlikely to change the habits of a lifetime and will remain obese.

Sioux Bradshaw
Literary Psychologist

UPDATED CLASSICS

Alice Through The YouTube

O·B·N

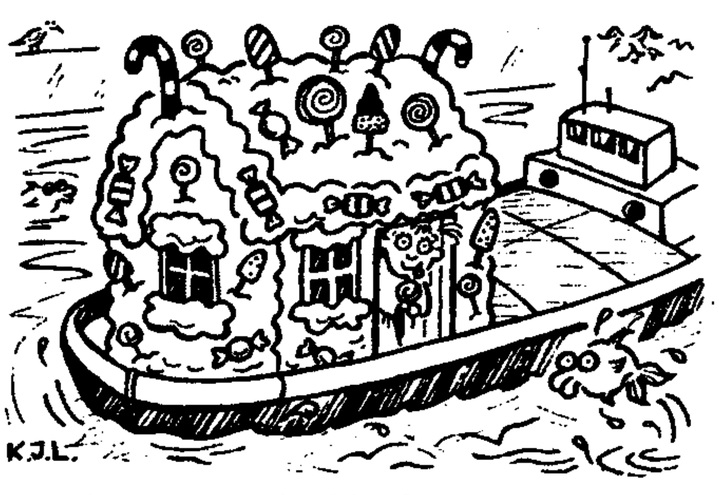
"Tomorrow marks the 60th birthday of much the most important British public intellectual of the present day… 'Public intellectual' is a modern way of saying Renaissance man. Charles fits that description. He paints more than competent watercolours. He is a cellist (no easy instrument). Even though outclassed by his sister Anne, he is an accomplished horseman and an outstanding devotee of the noblest of sports: deer-stalking. He is a man of insatiable intellectual curiosity who is incapable of intellectual complacency. He is entitled to make a claim which the rest of us lesser beings should envy: nil humanum a me alienum."

BRUCE ANDERSON
Independent

Pseuds Corner

Arguably, the most compelling fashion designers have long been those who engage with the zeitgeist. In early September, Cathy Horyn, the fashion editor of the New York Times, saw a direct link between the tunics layered over trousers at Marc Jacobs' catwalk show and the pop-over aprons of the Depression era. Weeks later, as investors from London to New York scrambled to buy gold bullion, Miucca Prada in Milan brought a new meaning to investment dressing by pronouncing that what women really care about 'at a primitive level' is gold, dressing her models in Mad Men-esque skirt suits but in metallic gold linen.

JESS CARTNER-MORLEY
Guardian



What's the next big thing?
Figurative food: food that's in the shape of something else. We've read about a food mountain in the 1800s that was almost life-size and had children dressed as raggedy shepherd boys coming out of caves within it and singing to people as they ate bits. We'd like to have a go at that maybe float it down the Thames. There would be health and safety issues with using children in the food mountain, though. Anyway, it's basically another way to engage people and introduce them to new flavours and sensations.

'Architectural foodsmiths' BOMPASS and PARR
Guardian

In the same way that a depressive sleeps so his unconscious mind can find order within its convoluted impulses, we have slumbered in our surround sound biodomes so that the exigencies of the Bush World will have a chance to iron themselves out.

MICHAEL ATKINSON on the American cinema audience – Sight and Sound

Eating the Other: deconstructing the 'ethics' of cannibalism
This paper uses the work of Jacques Derrida to 'read' the consensual cannibalism of Armin Miewes and Bernd Brandes that took place in Germany in 2001. In particular, the paper aims to create a dialogue between Derrida's notion of symbolic cannibalism and the actual real case of consensual cannibalism, in order to potentially offer critical insights into the humanist ethical responses and discourse that surround and contribute to a dominant thinking on consensual cannibalism, but also, more importantly, to shed light on the ways in which ethical dimensions are not only made on a day to day basis, but how they are constructed, embodied and 'voiced', more generally, in Western society.

Manchester Metropolitan University research seminar conducted by DR NICOLE ANDERSON, Macquarrie University, Sydney

My favourite items of clothing...are my furs, all of my furs. I hate the idea of an animal dying in vain, so I make sure to love them all in an extra special way.

MARGOT STILLEY, actress
Independent Magazine

This act of escapology was worthy of Harry Houdini. On an incredible night Tottenham were beaten not once, twice, but three times, though like a modern-day St Peter found themselves in a state of insistent denial.

MATT HUGHES
The Times

Building differences: material geographies of home(s) among Polish builders in London

AYONA DATTA article published in Transactions of the Institute of British Geographer

CONTRIBUTORS: Patricia Hammond, Joe Hickey, APR, Mark Cresswell, Lindsey Kaye, David Segal Hamilton, Robert Laurie.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

SNIFFER DOGS

A nose for trouble

REVELATIONS that there were no body parts, no credible allegations of murder and no evidence of any dead victims at the Haut de la Garenne children's home in Jersey may finally persuade credulous police to stop employing the two dogs said to possess extraordinary sniffing skills beyond the ability of usual forensic hounds.

Jersey police apparently spent £100,000 on the skills of super-spaniels Eddie and Keela. Eddie was credited with being able to sniff out fragments of old human bone, even when buried under thick concrete. Thanks to his reactions at sites around the home and in particular the "cellar" (which turned out not to be a cellar) where he was said to have picked up "the smell of corpses", Jersey's former police chief, Lenny Harper, was able to tell an equally gullible press that up to seven bodies might be buried at Haut la Garenne.

Keela's specialty was said to be human blood; she apparently picked up what were said to have been two spots of blood which were in reality, er, rust.

Enhanced victim recovery dogs, or "cadaver dogs", are usually used to find missing bodies in shallow graves or to find the body parts of bomb-blast victims. But when these two jetsetting wonder-dogs were called in to trace the missing Madeleine McCann, they ended up pointing their wet noses of suspicion at her hapless parents. Police said Eddie had picked up the "smell of corpse" on Mrs McCann's bible and in the boot of their holiday car. Keela was said to have detected blood traces on the washed walls of the family's holiday apartment.

Just like the Jersey discoveries, these claims have not stood up to forensic scrutiny. And that seems to be the trouble with the two former South Yorkshire police dogs and their former policeman turned freelance handler. There are no fixed guidelines on how the dogs are used, no tests to indicate how reliable they can be, and, it seems, no limit to the claims that can be made to account for their canine behaviour. Thus when they appear to smell a rat – it might be just that, a bit of animal. Yet they can set investigations off on wild and costly chases that deflect valuable manpower and resources.

FANTASY AIRPORTS

Plane stupidity?

LONDON mayor Boris Johnson has appointed the perfect candidate to help him build (or not) his fantasy island airport in the Thames: Doug Oakervee (pictured), current head of Crossrail, who will lead the first "feasibility study" into the new floating airport.

Johnson's deputy Kit Malthouse gushed that Oakervee was "a colossal figure from the engineering world" and that "bringing his extensive skills and judgement to this unique and important project is great news".

Really? As the *Eye* has reported (1197), Oakervee has form when it comes to big airport projects – and it ain't brilliant. He was in charge of the projects division responsible for the disastrous opening of Hong Kong's Chek Lap Kok airport. An official inquiry by the Hong Kong legislative council into the bungled opening decided Oakervee had "failed" and was responsible for "poor project management". It pointed to his "unco-operative attitude and overbearing personality" and said he "frequently provided vague, inaccurate and misleading information, to put forward an optimistic picture to discourage too close probing".

The Hong Kong opening was marred by everything from blank information displays and long delays to lost luggage, filthy toilets and security lapses — scary when you consider that the new mayor wants to model his fantasy island airport on, er, Chek Lap Kok, and talked up Oakervee's "instrumental" role in that airport's development.

Oakervee moved on and since December 2005 has been executive chairman of Crossrail, which aims to link existing railways east and west of London. He will maintain his links with Crossrail, as non-executive chairman, after a new chief executive is appointed early next year. So his acceptance of Boris's offer is curious: Crossrail, as currently planned, and "Boris island" appear mutually exclusive.

The British Airports Authority (BAA), which owns Heathrow, agreed this month to stump up £230m for Crossrail. "In return, Crossrail will guarantee a fast train service four times an hour for the majority of the day... from Heathrow airport," explained the Department for Transport.

However, the point of Boris Island is to replace a creaking old airport in a built-up area, as Chek Lap Kok did. And without Heathrow airport feeding passengers into Crossrail's western end, Crossrail would end up ludicrously imbalanced, with far more people using it east of London than west.

Gordon Brown hopes more businesses will invest in the £16bn Crossrail scheme, but who will want to stump up when they see Oakervee exploring a proposal that would drastically cut Crossrail's earning power to the west of the capital?

POLICE 5

Mark Camm and the laughing policemen

POLICE officers threatened to beat animal lover Mark Camm's "mangy little dog" with a bat, in order to provoke and force him to speak, after he was arrested for being drunk and disorderly.

In fact Mr Camm was far from being drunk. He was suffering a brain haemorrhage from a ruptured aneurism, which rendered him unable to talk. And while officers made sick jokes about what they perceived to be 43-year-old Mr Camm's learning difficulties and pretended to lick his cell window, with one officer calling him "obnoxious", his life was slowly slipping away.

As one medical expert told his inquest, during the 25 long hours that police held Mr Camm in a cell at Wood Street, Wakefield, they actually treated his dog better. The terrier was given water; Mr Camm was not. And the resulting dehydration contributed to his fatal deterioration.

Until he was finally taken to hospital, he may have heard every ghastly word the officers uttered. As his condition deteriorated, his right side becoming weaker and his gait unsteady, one officer commented: "You have to pay for entertainment like this." Since his evidently unlawful detention in June 2004, some of those officers have been promoted.

The disturbing scenes were caught on CCTV and audio footage played to an inquest jury, which recorded a seven-page verdict damning not only the police and medical staff who examined him at the police station, but also those in the Accident & Emergency department of Pinderfields Hospital. He remained in A&E for a staggering 13 hours on a trolley before being moved to a medical ward and finally being diagnosed with a life-threatening brain bleed. He was transferred to Leeds General Infirmary, but by then it was too late. He died 11 days later.

Ruth Bundey, the solicitor acting for Mr Camm's two sisters, says his treatment was "deplorable and indefensible". According to Deborah Coles of Inquest, the organisation that campaigns for those who die in custody, it was "one of the most shameful cases of callous neglect we have seen".

Mr Camm was arrested, along with his dog, in an off-licence at midday on 17 June after he refused to leave. He was hardly able to speak and was unsteady on his feet. On his arrival at the police station, officers thought he was drunk and staging some kind of protest, refusing to speak. Even though a nurse noted that he did not smell of alcohol, no alarm was raised.

Although he was supposed to have been checked and roused every half-hour, officers did not bother, instead fabricating entries into the custody record. Of the 18 visits recorded to Mr Camm's cell during the night shift of 18 June, only five took place and not one was a proper check. (His weren't the only falsified records – of 96 recorded checks on prisoners that night, 67 were not done at all.)

During Mr Camm's detention, he was seen by two police doctors. One took only 97 seconds to examine him and decided he had mental health problems and should be seen by a psychiatrist the following day. The second doctor, who failed to pick up on his right-sided partial paralysis and weakness, thought his condition might have been triggered by drugs as well as drink.

Concerns that Mr Camm was not "sobering up" as one would expect of a drunk were lost in "the banter". Another officer pointed out that Mr Camm could not be charged with being drunk and disorderly because he was far from disorderly. But they decided to detain him because he wasn't safe to be left on his own, rather than take him to a hospital.

When the 24-hour deadline for detention without charge approached, they took medical advice to take him to hospital for a blood test and found him curled in a ball on the floor of his cell, soaked in his own urine. Even then they bundled him into the cage at the back of a van, where he was left unobserved, instead of summoning an ambulance. No proper note was sent with Mr Camm, nor was a phone call made to alert the hospital to his recent history, and he effectively "got lost" in the system at Pinderfields. He didn't pass through the usual triage system; his reception card was lost. There were only baseline observations and although they showed an alarmingly high pulse rate, no further observation was done while he was on the trolley.

"The wholly inadequate assessment at A&E to diagnose a neurological condition also contributed to his death," the jury decided.

No one knows whether Mr Camm would have survived such a serious brain condition. But what is clear from the jury's findings is that not only was he denied the chance of survival, his last hours of consciousness were spent helpless in the face of cruel torment and neglect.

SCHOOLS REPORT

ACADEMIES

Oasis in blur

MORE on Oasis, the Christian group running Mayfield Academy in Southampton where pupils ran amok (see last *Eye*).

Oasis understands it has discipline problems at the riot-hit school, but is trying to deal with these by hiring non-professional "general patrol" staff to "patrol the academy site" and "challenge students out of lessons".

Following our article on protests and disruption by pupils and the flight of staff from the new school, Oasis issued a statement. "Two troubled predecessor schools have been merged into one academy," it said, "and new, innovative education programmes have been put into place. These changes, however, will take some time for parents, students and staff to adjust to."

Er, shome mishtake shurely? The two secondary schools Oasis took over and merged – Woolston and Grove Park – were not "troubled" at all. The latest Ofsted reports called one a "good school" and the other a "satisfactory", "improving" school.

Mayfield in fact only became troubled when Oasis took over. Staff and parents put this down to arrogance and incompetence on the part of Oasis, which made existing staff apply for their own jobs, allowed many to leave and then applied new, ineffective organisational arrangements. These included encouraging staff to bin old textbooks on the promise of replacements that have yet to arrive, shuttling staff between sites on a defective bus, and taking responsibilities from established heads of year and handing them to inexperienced support staff, undermining discipline.

● DESPITE the problems at Oasis, they have not deterred Stagecoach boss Brian Souter from pumping his money into the organisation.

The Scottish *Sunday Herald* recently uncovered in the Stagecoach accounts a £500,000 corporate donation to fund a new gym at the Oasis Academy Wintringham, in Grimsby. The Souter Charitable Trust has also given thousands of pounds to Oasis.

Eye readers will recall how Souter, an evangelical Christian, bankrolled the campaign against Labour's repeal of section 28, the legislation outlawing the promotion of homosexuality by local authorities (*Eye* 994). However, despite all the government's efforts to remove section 28, it has now handed schools and youth clubs over to Oasis, an organisation that is bringing it right back again. Oasis's sex and relationship education policy states: "The Oasis Community Learning Board will not permit the promotion of homosexuality."

TEACHERS

Libel lessons

A LAMBETH primary school has taken an extraordinary step in its battle with two newly-qualified teachers who quit their jobs: it has turned to... libel lawyers Carter Fuck!

Durand primary school had its high-priced lawyers fire off furious letters to the General Teaching Council (GTC) and the teachers' union rep. It is also taking legal action against one of the teachers' fathers.

As a foundation school, Durand is state-funded but free of local authority control. It complained to the GTC that both Lindsey Carrier and Jennifer Newall left before working out their notice. A judgment against them could have ruined two young women's teaching careers. However, the GTC ruled last month that the pair had actually been given permission to leave when they did and cleared them of all allegations, saying that their relationship with their employer had broken down through no fault of their own.

The committee's ruling added damningly: "We heard much evidence about the management of Durand School in this hearing which concerns us, in particular regarding the way induction and school teachers pay and conditions were managed. It is not our function to deal with these issues, but we note our concern."

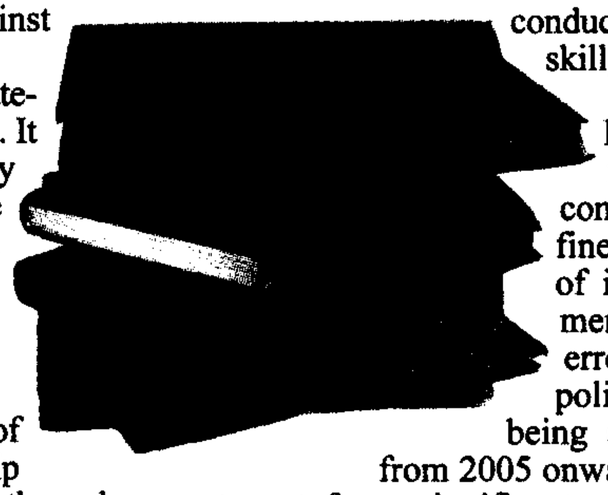
The *Eye* has seen Carter Fuck's letter to the GTC, moaning about the hearing and asking for the findings to be reserved. The letter also refers to ongoing libel proceedings against Miss Newall's father, Jeff, who was critical of the school's newly-qualified teacher scheme, and a threatened legal battle with Lambeth council. Meanwhile Lambeth NUT secretary Ray Sirotkin confirmed that the union had also been accused of libel after criticising the school on its website. "It's the Robert Maxwell school of diplomacy," he said. Are so many legal fights really the best use of school funds?

STUDENTS

EMA error

NO ONE should have been remotely surprised when financial services firm Liberata cocked up payment of the educational maintenance allowance (EMA) to hundreds of thousands of students at the start of the current academic year.

For according to the Financial Services Authority (FSA), even before it was hired to make the EMA payments to students from low-income families, Liberata had acted "recklessly" and failed "to conduct its business with due skill, care and diligence".



The FSA slammed Liberata earlier this year for not organising or controlling its affairs and fined it £525,000 after many of its life insurance customers lost money because of errors in the production of policy documents. Despite being aware of the problems from 2005 onwards, Liberata had failed to act for a significant period of time, said the FSA.

Although Liberata wasn't fined until this April, its dreadful failures were reported to the FSA in January 2007 – seven months *before* the Learning and Skills Council decided to give it £75m of public money to oversee the EMA payments.

Liberata was finally sacked last week, with tens of thousands of students *still* waiting for their money. Under the contract Liberata was supposed to make payments to 500,000 young people, many of whom have struggled to stay in education without the money. Many colleges have had to dip into hardship funds to support them. The contract is now to be taken over by those champions of competence, er, Crapita.

REVENUE & CUSTOMS

A Lamey excuse

WHEN a consortium of Capgemini and Fujitsu won a three-year extension to its ten-year "Aspire" contract to run HM Revenue and Customs information technology a year ago (despite having seen the cost of the original deal rise from £2.8bn to £8.5bn), it was clear the firms and the tax authorities were on friendly terms.

Just how friendly can be seen from details of Capgemini and Fujitsu's schmoozing of the man responsible for extending the IT contract: HMRC's £250,000-a-year chief information officer (since promoted to chief operating officer), Steve Lamey.

In the 20 months up to December 2006 (HMRC wouldn't release later details), Lamey was entertained by Capgemini on 14 occasions and by Fujitsu five times. Highlights included a night at the opera and dinners at upmarket London restaurants L'Estaminet and the Berkeley, not to mention dinner at Chateau Les Fontaines just outside, ahem, Paris after making a speech.

This wasn't the only foreign junket for Lamey. The week before he had been enjoying the Parisian panorama over a gourmet dinner at the Jules Verne restaurant halfway up the Eiffel Tower. One of HMRC's software suppliers, SAP, picked up the tab.

The previous month Lamey had found himself in Barcelona troughing with IT consultants and seminar hosts Gartner at the Can Trevi Nou and the Barceloneta on consecutive nights. Other eateries taken in courtesy of IT firms included the Lanesborough and the Gavroche.

All told, in just over a year and a half the hungry Lamey had 70 breakfast, lunch and dinners paid for. But it's the freebies from Capgemini and Fujitsu, whose multi-million pound cheques Lamey was signing on behalf of the taxpayer and to whom he would soon grant a multi-billion pound contract extension, that look particularly questionable.

HMRC's own hospitality policy bars schmoozing that is "too frequent or prolonged" or "part of a regular pattern" and states ominously: "If the jobholder has direct dealings, for example in a procurement or control capacity, with the individual or organisation offering the hospitality, approval for anything other than basic conventional hospitality will be inappropriate – the Prevention of Corruption Acts may be particularly relevant."

This legislation is particularly tough for public servants, carrying a presumption of corruption where the recipient makes decisions, such as handing out huge IT contracts, in which the giver has an interest.

● A DECADE of cosying up to big business by the tax authorities has been justified by the official HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) line that "the majority of businesses want to pay the right amount of tax at the right time". But the evidence proves otherwise.

After a seven-month freedom of information battle, HMRC has released the results of a survey conducted four years ago among its senior tax inspectors in which they classified 16 of the 102 of the largest companies operating in Britain as "serial [tax] avoiders", 40 as "opportunistic avoiders" and 40 as "non-avoiders". In other words, 55 percent avoided tax – a somewhat different picture to that of the nation's big businesses happily coughing up their dues.

Earlier this year members of parliament's public accounts committee (PAC) questioned HMRC boss Dave Hartnett on its approach to taxing big business and queried the rose-tinted glasses the country's top tax inspector appeared to be wearing. They were reassured that the Pollyanna approach was indeed the right one, and the MPs last month duly reported without disputing it. The Revenue-business love-in continues.

How odd then that it was only the day *after* the PAC report that the survey – proving that the majority of big businesses don't in fact "want to pay the right amount of tax at the right time" – was released to the *Eye* under FoI laws. Clearly the fact that multinationals fleece the rest of us for several billions every year while the Revenue pretends otherwise is not something parliament ought to know about.

In the Back continues overleaf ➤

PLANET PFI

DEFENCE

MoD off its rocker

THE National Audit Office has sugared yet another PFI report – this time on the "allocation and management of risk" in Ministry of Defence PFI projects – with its standard introduction whitewash declaring that "deals are delivered satisfactorily, on time and on budget".

Only the small print reveals that they were only "on time and to budget following the contract signature". Given that costs frequently go through the roof in the 45 months it takes on average to get to this stage for deals worth more than £50m, the statement is therefore meaningless.

For example, the cost of the MoD's headquarters rocketed by £99m, or more than 20 percent of the value. Yet the NAO finding provides the perfect endorsement to please defence PFI enthusiasts such as MoD commercial director Amyas Morse (formerly of PwC, which advised on the HQ deal) and the various firms represented on the "expert panel" consulted for the latest study, including, er, PwC, KPMG and BAE Systems.

Elsewhere the report highlighted the common absurdities of PFI contracts. Under a 20-year waste water PFI deal at Tidworth Garrison, for example, "foul sewage flooding to the indoor premises would… incur a £150 penalty". One particularly hare-brained scheme was the PFI deal to effectively privatise the Armoured Vehicle Training Service under which squaddies would learn how to drive and fire Challengers and other tanks. After six years and £5m in costs, in 2005 the deal was pulled with no contract in sight, amid confusion over wheezes that could only exist on planet PFI, such as the "transfer of course pass rate risk", whatever that means. £13.5 million then had to be paid to the disappointed bidders, over half of it for "intellectual property rights" which have yet to be used.

Undeterred, as the *Eye* has reported, the MoD now plans a £12bn PFI deal to privatise defence training across all the services. Unsurprisingly about 30 percent of this plan has already been pulled and the rest is way behind schedule.

Incompetence turned into fraud, meanwhile, on the "defence fixed telecommunications system" PFI contract with BT. The NAO reported that "staff in call centres operated under the contract were artificially inflating call numbers to meet targets for successfully completed calls". Though the filched "service payments" of £1m have been repaid, as has the £122k cost of an MoD police investigation, no compensation or fine has been paid and BT keeps its £200m-a-year contract. A few junior staff have been fired, and the MoD is "confident that the current good working relationships can be maintained and that it has been resolved in a professional manner by senior staff". So that's all right then.

● PS: Trustworthy BT is meanwhile also running the national medical record "spine" on a £1bn NHS contract.

HEALTH

Lift going down

YET another bizarre government off-balance sheet financing ruse is unravelling as health authorities shun the PFI scheme to build local health centres, the so-called Local Improvement Finance Trust (LIFT).

The scheme, originally launched in 2001, involves setting up a joint venture between government body Partnerships for Health, the local NHS and a private sector company. This "special purpose vehicle" leases new "super surgeries" under PFI contracts to the occupants including GPs, primary care trusts and businesses such as pharmacies. The scheme is designed to accommodate the government's controversial "polyclinic" initiative.

Alas, LIFT is so complicated and expensive that only lawyers, consultants and the odd builder like it. It took a government bribe of £200m spread across 50 deals in the initial wave, which together will cost more £5bn, to get any health services to sign up. Even then GPs complained that LIFT worked out more expensive than their old premises.

When the subsidy dried up, health authorities lost all interest and a rethink was desperately needed. The new wheeze, called "LIFT Express", aims to shortcut some of the bureaucracy of setting up a LIFT deal by appointing a panel of private companies that can be chosen without costly competition to build the new facilities. But it's still PFI – so the companies, through the "special purpose vehicle", will still have health services over a barrel for 30 years or so.

Now it seems the tinkering hasn't worked. A survey by *Public Private Finance* magazine finds that only one in five of the 75 primary care trusts targeted for the scheme has any interest in it, one pointing out that it doesn't offer value for money.

That LIFT has got so far before getting stuck can be blamed partly on a 2005 endorsement from the amenable National Audit Office, which called it "an effective means of improving primary health and social care". *Eye* 1149 then discovered that no cost comparison between LIFT and the public sector alternative had been made, even though the NAO incorrectly told the public accounts committee that it had. Now LIFT turns out not to be worth the price. There's a surprise.

EDUCATION

Building blocks

THE corresponding but even bigger programme for new schools is "Building Schools for the Future", valued at £15bn. This has also been hugely delayed by the bureaucracy that attends it, involving joint ventures between local authorities and PFI companies. Fewer than 40 schools will have been built by the end of the year against a target of 200.

But having guaranteed that new infrastructure will go through these and other processes spawned from PFI, chancellor Alistair Darling faces a dilemma over his Keynesian investment plans. If he wants the projects moving at a pace that will provide any economic stimulus, he will have to ditch some of the tortuous PFI procurement methods. Not before time, but slightly embarrassing for his boss Gordon Brown who foisted them on public services in the first place.

MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE

Stock crisis

A DESPERATE appeal to the men who carried out the Leeds Tesco robbery 39 years ago to come forward to exonerate Tony Stock (*Eyes passim*) was made by his lawyers last week after judges effectively blocked any further legal challenges to his conviction.

Last Thursday, the appeal court refused to allow Stock, now 70, to take his case to the House of Lords, meaning he is likely to die a "guilty" man. *Eye* readers may recall that Stock was convicted solely on the basis of a doorstep identification by a witness who had only a "fleeting glimpse" of one of the violent robbers. Because such evidence is notoriously unreliable, it would not now be allowed to go before a jury.

However, despite his case's referral back to the appeal court for a record fourth time by an unusually determined criminal cases review commission (CCRC), Lord Justice Latham dismissed in just 15 paragraphs the five grounds of appeal set out in five large lever-arch files.

He was equally dismissive of last week's application to the Lords, which took barely half an hour. Stock's lawyers had wanted the law lords to rule on how the appeal courts should deal with evidence that would now be ruled inadmissible, and on how much weight should be given to previous appeal court rulings – after all, his 1996 appeal was thrown out by none other than Igor Judge, the new lord chief justice.

Latham's refusal to entertain the move prompted the appeal to the real robbers. One of them, supergrass Samuel Benefield, has already told the courts he had never heard of Stock. His four accomplices were men called Charles Knight, Clive Bobrow, Bernard Khan and Brian Horace Sims.

Stock and his solicitor, Glyn Maddocks, tracked down Bobrow, who initially said he was willing to help and told Maddocks: "I can 110 percent guarantee that he was not there on the day of the robbery." But when it came to putting that down in writing, Bobrow got cold feet, implying he wanted neither to be seen as a "grass" nor to incriminate himself.

In a sworn statement, Maddocks set out details of his meetings and telephone calls with Bobrow – but the court of appeal refused even to look at it.

Now Stock is at the end of the court road, he hopes Bobrow and the others may change their minds to get the case back again before the CCRC. Failing that, Maddocks is hoping politicians and human-rights lawyers may support an early-day motion to get an inquiry under way into the stalled case. One person he is hoping to recruit to the cause is Vera Baird QC, the solicitor-general. After all, she was Stock's barrister during the failed appeal before judge Judge.

YARL'S WOOD

Borders line

SO MUCH for the Borders Agency's promise to seek an alternative to locking children up at the notorious Yarl's Wood immigration detention centre in Bedfordshire. Plans to double the size of Yarl's Wood have now gone on show.

The centre's treatment of youngsters, sometimes held there for months at a time, was slammed by chief prisons inspector Anne Owers in August. She said children there became withdrawn, suffered panic attacks and stopped eating. She was especially horrified by the detention of a child with multiple severe disabilities in a place ill-equipped to cope. And a report in September found alarming levels of self-harm by Yarl's Wood detainees.

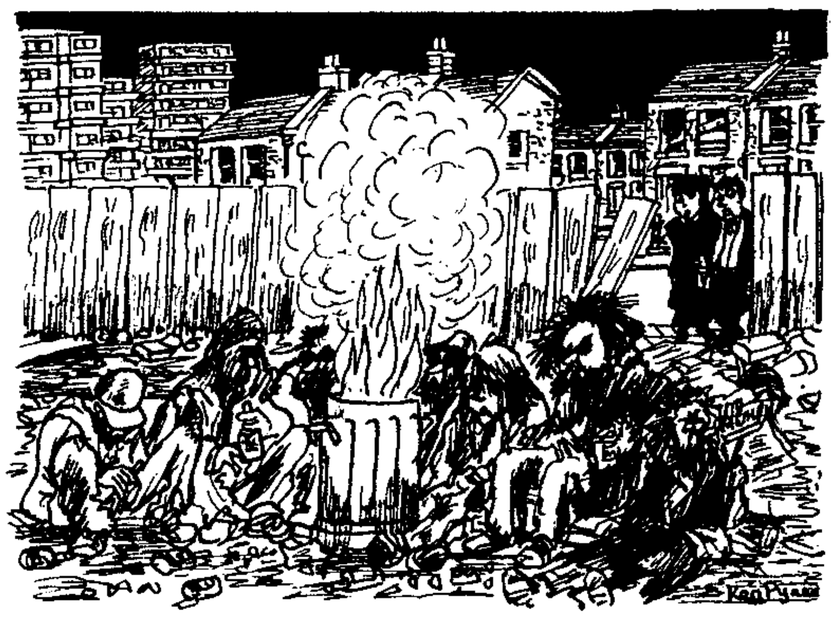
The Home Office says that having more places to detain immigrants at Yarl's Wood and elsewhere will let it "remove more, and remove them faster". The current centre, for women and family groups, holds around 400 detainees. The expansion plans, on show at Clapham parish hall, in Bedfordshire, would take the capacity back up to 800, close to the total held at Yarl's Wood before the rioting and fire that destroyed much of the £80m centre in 2002.

In the City

NOBODY could accuse Tesco of not having a sense of humour. Ahead of the crisis budget, chief executive Sir Terry Leahy and his influential co-director Lucy Neville-Rolfe were calling for cuts in business rates on properties.

According to the *Financial Times*, Tesco was looking at "tens of millions" in extra business-rate taxes on its properties as a result of next year's planned annual inflation rise.

As *Private Eye* has previously detailed, Tesco has been a major customer for tax schemes designed to avoid stamp duty land tax on sale and leaseback deals for its stores and warehouses which pay business rates. The saving for Tesco from these schemes is estimated at up to £63m.



"It's the stockbroker belt"

But while begging for tax breaks, Tesco is less keen to explain its own tax avoidance activities, even after the settlement of its libel action with the *Guardian* over the latter's misguided criticisms and Tesco's denial that it is a tax avoider.

Eye 1218 disclosed that three Tesco stores sold to a joint venture with the Universities Superannuation Scheme pension fund involved offshore unit trusts and partnerships. But when asked to clarify how the deals – involving the Tesco Fuchsia and Tesco Coral limited partnerships, the Tesco Coral Unit Trust and the Coral JPUT (aka Jersey property unit trust) Company – had been structured, and who paid UK corporation tax and SDLT on what, after a long silence all Tesco would say was that such details were "commercially confidential". Tesco insisted that "any profits are made by UK tax resident entities".

However, what is certain is that the Tesco stores are now in a JPUT owned by USS which, like many pension funds, uses these schemes to avoid double taxation.

Hopefully the chancellor will be sympathetic to Tesco's pleas.

THE phoney pharaoh Mohamed Fayed seems to be having no difficulty finding new lenders, despite the credit crunch.

In July Deutsche Postbank arranged a syndicated loan to Prestige Properties, the Liechtenstein company through which Fayed owns his Park Lane properties. The loan is in part secured on the leaseholds of 60 Park Lane – where the pharaoh has a penthouse office – and parts of 55 Park Lane. Prestige would appear to still owe the £50m or so it borrowed from the now nationalised Bradford & Bingley in 2003, secured on 55 Park Lane. More prosaically, last month Harrods also secured financing from leasing and factoring providers Hitachi Capital.

All this comes on top of the £650m Fayed companies borrowed from Royal Bank of Scotland almost two years ago – £350m of which went to repay a previous loan secured on the Harrods properties. RBS also still has €109m (now £93m) loaned against the Paris Ritz, which is due for repayment in May next year.

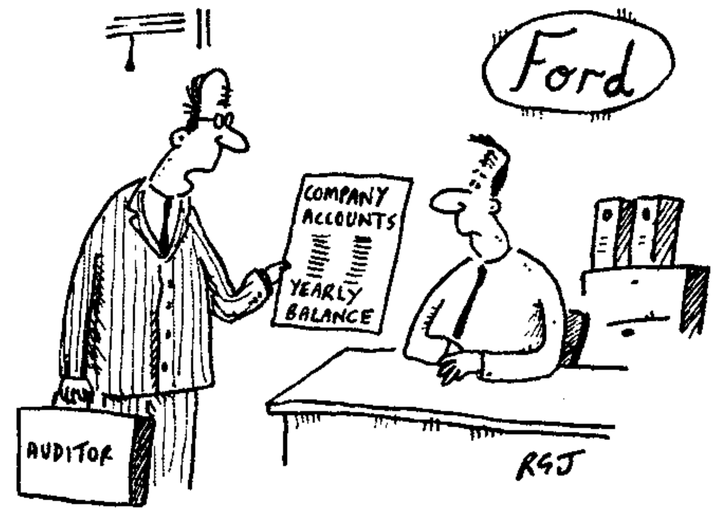
No doubt Fayed and RBS will be among those hoping Chancellor Alistair Darling's proposed Budget measures will boost spending at Harrods and the Ritz.

EXPRESS owner and pornographer Richard Desmond is clearly the client from hell when things go wrong. Just ask hedge-fund manager (retired) Lewis Chester and his partner Jafar Omid.

Desmond was for several years a client of their Pentagon Capital Management. Chester and Omid claim he had been a "very substantial investor" who had made "tens of millions of dollars". But when Pentagon decided to suspend trading in its funds and wind down its operations last March and return investors the estimated £1bn it had under management – in the face of civil fraud allegations from Wall Street regulator the Securities and Exchange Commission – they say Desmond became a very unhappy camper about being unable to obtain the return of £75,000.

Tory donor Chester, who was at Oxford with David Cameron, and Pentagon are accused by the SEC of ripping off US mutual fund investors for $62m through "late trading" and deceptive "market timing" abuses, as detailed in the last *Eye*. The SEC sued Chester and Pentagon in April. The SEC accuses Chester et al of defrauding US mutual funds (unit trusts) and their shareholders from June 1999 until September 2003. Chester and Pentagon are accused of making illicit profits which the SEC wants disgorged, plus penalties. Chester and Pentagon deny the allegations and are seeking to dismiss the SEC case on several legal grounds at a hearing in New York next month.

Fortunately for Dirty Des, Pentagon says he had pulled out most of his money in 2007. But Pentagon claims that did not make him any more understanding about the remainder, which represented a trust fund, the Dezco Fund, for his son Robert. This had been started with £50,000 in 2003 and at the suspension was worth £75,000



"You can have any colour you like, as long as it's red"

– perhaps not the return expected.

The details of what allegedly happened over the £75,000 are contained in a legal action that Chester, his father David (Pentagon's largest shareholder), Omid and Pentagon have filed against Desmond over his behaviour. Pentagon has informed investors that their money will be repaid by 2010.

The particulars of the claim filed in September say that in May this year Desmond demanded that the £75,000 be repaid "forthwith". Chester and Omid claim they told Desmond this was not possible because they did not control the Pentagon funds and could not pay him themselves as this would be unlawful and contrary to City regulations. These explanations did not impress.

On 9 July Omid says he was called by property man Gerald Ronson, another client and friend of Desmond who had introduced him to Pentagon. Omid claims that Ronson said Desmond was "very irate" and that the situation was "explosive".

Desmond was reported by Ronson to have said he cancelled a meeting because "I'll be doing things I regret afterwards". Ronson went on to say: "You know him, he's very volatile… You're talking to me, I understand what you are saying and it all sounds very logical, but that's not where he's coming from."

The particulars of the claim then allege what happened when Omid called Desmond the following day:

***JO**: Hi, I'm good, thank you. I had a call from our mutual friend to say you were upset with me so I thought I better have a chat with you. I was supposed to be coming to see you a couple of weeks ago and your secretary called and cancelled it.*

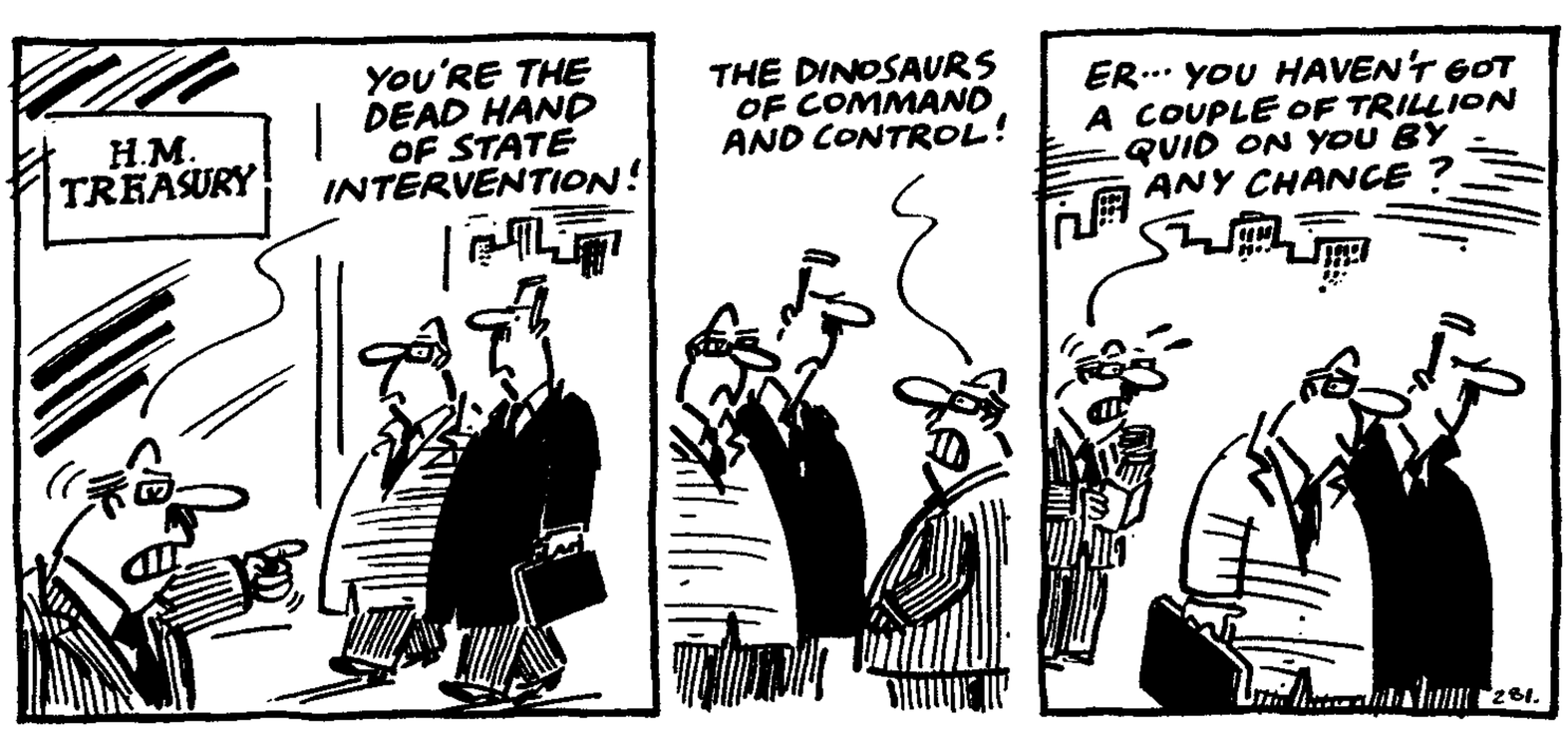
***RD**: Yeah, I know we had something… What I'm worried about is me getting angry, Jafar. It's 75 grand, you know, and I think, fuck me, we've done so much business together, you know, tens of millions of pounds, and you know we got a little, what's the word, situation over 75 grand. The problem is that it's on my mind, you see, so it doesn't matter if it's 75 grand or 75 million, it's on my mind all the time.*

***JO**: I mean again this was the purpose of me coming to see you to explain the background.*

***RD**: No, I understand, I think I understand*

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG


H.M. TREASURY
YOU'RE THE DEAD HAND OF STATE INTERVENTION!
THE DINOSAURS OF COMMAND AND CONTROL!
ER··· YOU HAVEN'T GOT A COUPLE OF TRILLION QUID ON YOU BY ANY CHANCE?
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I-SPY *Newhaven Fort, E. Sussex*

Submitted by Sean Cassidy. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs)*

☛ *See over...*

everything but it's on my fucking mind and you know the 75 grand, write a cheque out and assign it over to you and that's it.

***JO**: But unfortunately this is not how it works.*

***RD**: OK, please Jafar, don't go on because you're going to aggravate me. So look, just send me a cheque back, right, or we are not going to be friends – we are going to be enemies. OK, you've got till, what's the date today, Thursday...*

***JO**: Richard, listen.*

***RD**: Nope, that's it, mate. Please, I don't want to lose my temper with you. You know what a good friend I am Jafar, don't you?*

***JO**: This is why I called you.*

***RD**: Let me tell you something, Jafar, as good a friend as I am, I'm the worst fucking enemy you'll ever have. Please get me a cheque round. Thank you very much."*

Omid says Desmond then hung up but emailed him saying: "There is no point in us meeting. You're out of order."

Last week Desmond filed a defence to the action which he says he is prepared to settle. However, Desmond denied the Chester allegations, including of harassment or unreasonable behaviour. He accepted that the Omid conversation was perhaps direct and abrasive but that it was not to be taken literally and that the transcript did not give the full picture.

THE price of Lord (Sebastian) Coe's ailing Complete Leisure Group's rescue by textile tycoon Harold Tillman last year seems to have been that he handed over half his share stake. The latest CLG shareholders' list shows that Lord Coe's stake has fallen to 17.6m shares, or 33 percent, from 32m, while chairman Tillman's stake has risen from 2.6m to just over 17m (32 percent).

Just how much saviour Tillman paid for Coe's shares is confidential. All that Tillman will say is that he did pay. Tillman paid £100,000 for his initial 5 percent stake but is unlikely to have paid a pro rata amount – especially as he also guaranteed a £150,000 overdraft to the company, loaned CLG £50,000 interest-free and has since injected more money.

Without such support, it is possible that CLG would have collapsed; with it, Coe's shares at least might have some value. The service company Sebastian Coe Limited remains the most valuable asset, with its rights to the Coe image rights (brand), as we head for London 2012 with Coe as chairman of the organising committee.

The other big change at CLG has been the exit of its promoter, the serially unsuccessful Peter Abbey. Abbey originally held 4m shares through a Gibraltar company, Berkeley Consultants. It no longer holds any shares. It is understood that most if not all the Abbey shares have been acquired by Tillman's Jaeger associate and fellow CLG director, Andrew Mackenzie.

Tillman expects the company to be profitable this year. The other CLG investors, such as Tory MP William Hague, must be hoping Tillman will be able to continue to weave his Jaeger magic.

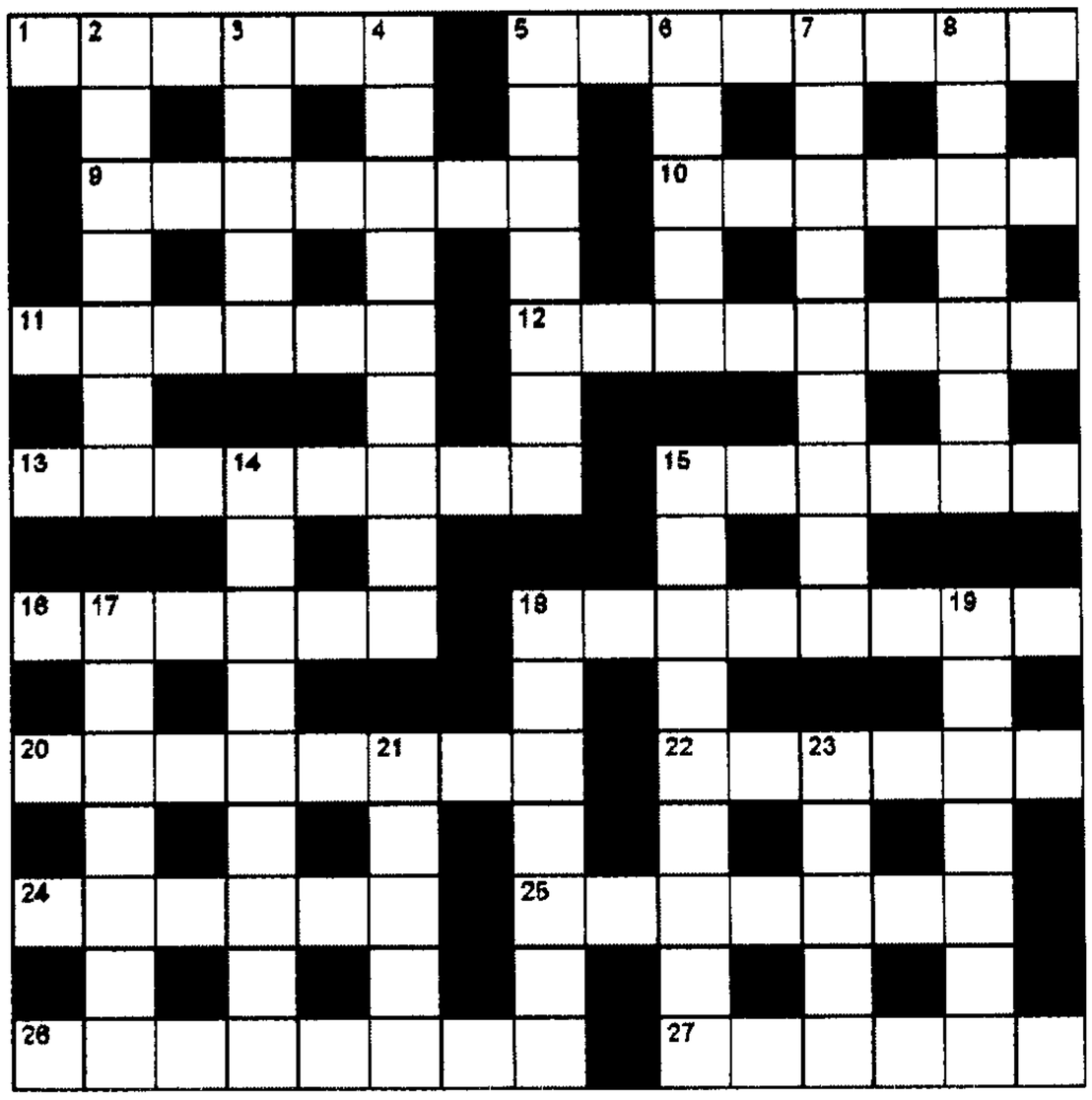
'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 379

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 5 December 2008

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk



ACROSS

1 Bollocks stink with infection (6)
5 Ruthlessness of, er, ruined bankers etc. (8)
9 Brown "nothing working" the clown (7)
10 Politician-speak from Jack – a gas! (6)
11/12 So, not secure at all, in the case of many bank loans? (2,4,2,6)
13 How a Mitford sister declared herself "entered by a short chap in French Resistance" (8)
15 He's biased, Bill, having been stuck in stir wrongly (6)
16 Pet the area between waist and knees, follow? (6)
18 Attack familiar old PM over what the West Midlands Police did? (6,2)
20 Like many a Daily Mail headline in the manner of Mrs T. raving about "independence" (8)
22 Guy likely to engender a burning desire in zealots? (6)
24 Almost cut off one's balls before leaders of South Kensington show up (6)
25 Belly, etc. wobbled, bad sign (7)
26 Administered by whips a great deal (8)
27 Political commentator hugs disheartened supporter of Cameron – he suffers (6)

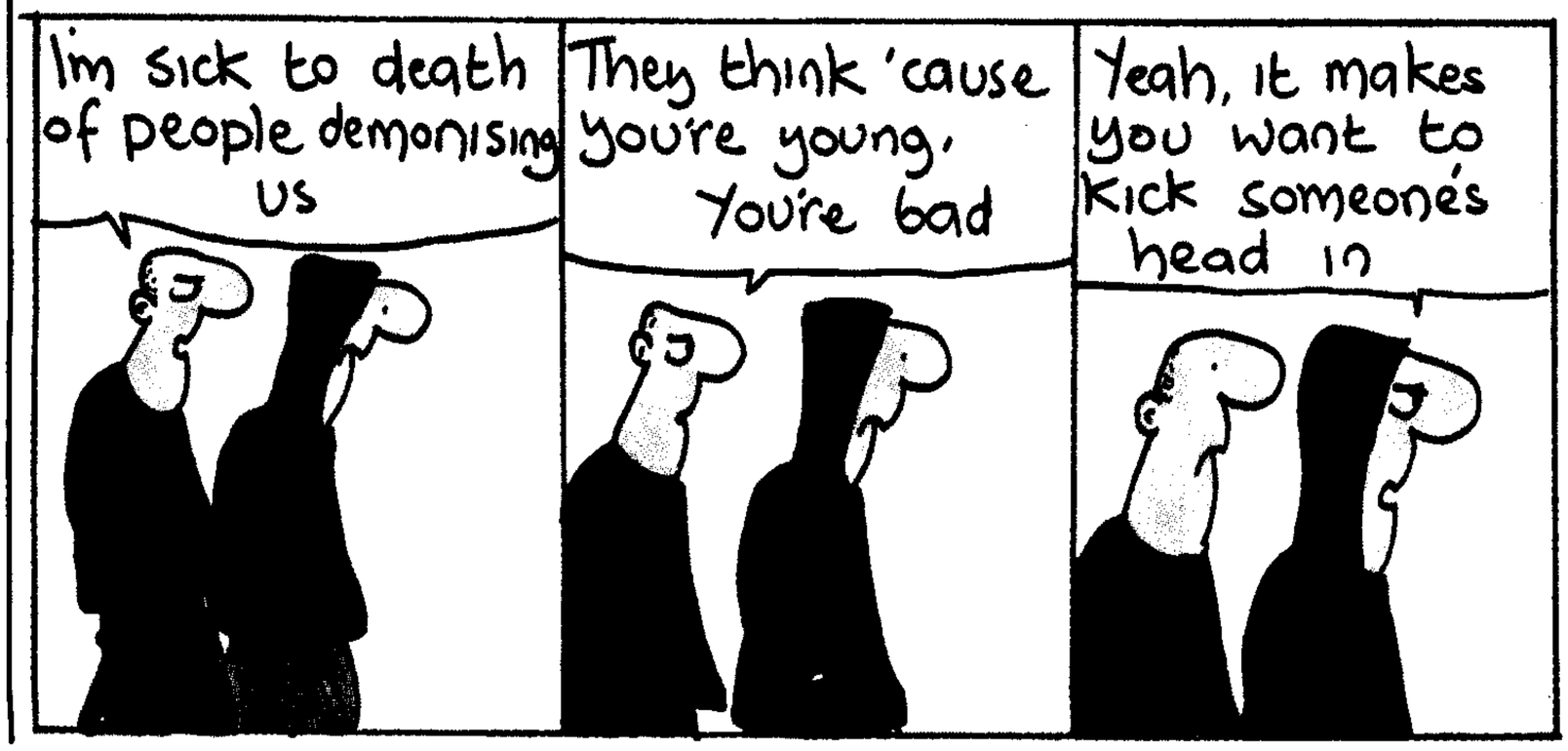
DOWN

2 Tell all and dispose of the knockers (7)
3 Cover behind with barium to get an award (5)
4 Gordon's main debasement: not looking too happy (9)
5 Any fatso getting end away affected vision (7)
6 Prince tipped over pint, having a hard on (5)
7 Princely description of a despised erection (9)
8 Gross flatterers' tools? (7)
14 What's lower than swearing? Being obliged to tell the truth! (5,4)
15 Port causes arse blockage (9)
17 Stuck up sports body wants half of TV partnership – one for the City (7)
18 Maybe those getting obscenely large bonuses, fast squandered, act uneasy inside (3,4)
19 Pressing need of old city gent (25% down) – call Treasury's no. 2 out (7)
21 To enter more firmly is an attribute of group relations (3,2)
23 Low-life Murdoch showing a bit of leg (5)

Crossword 378 winner: JOAN CALDICOTT

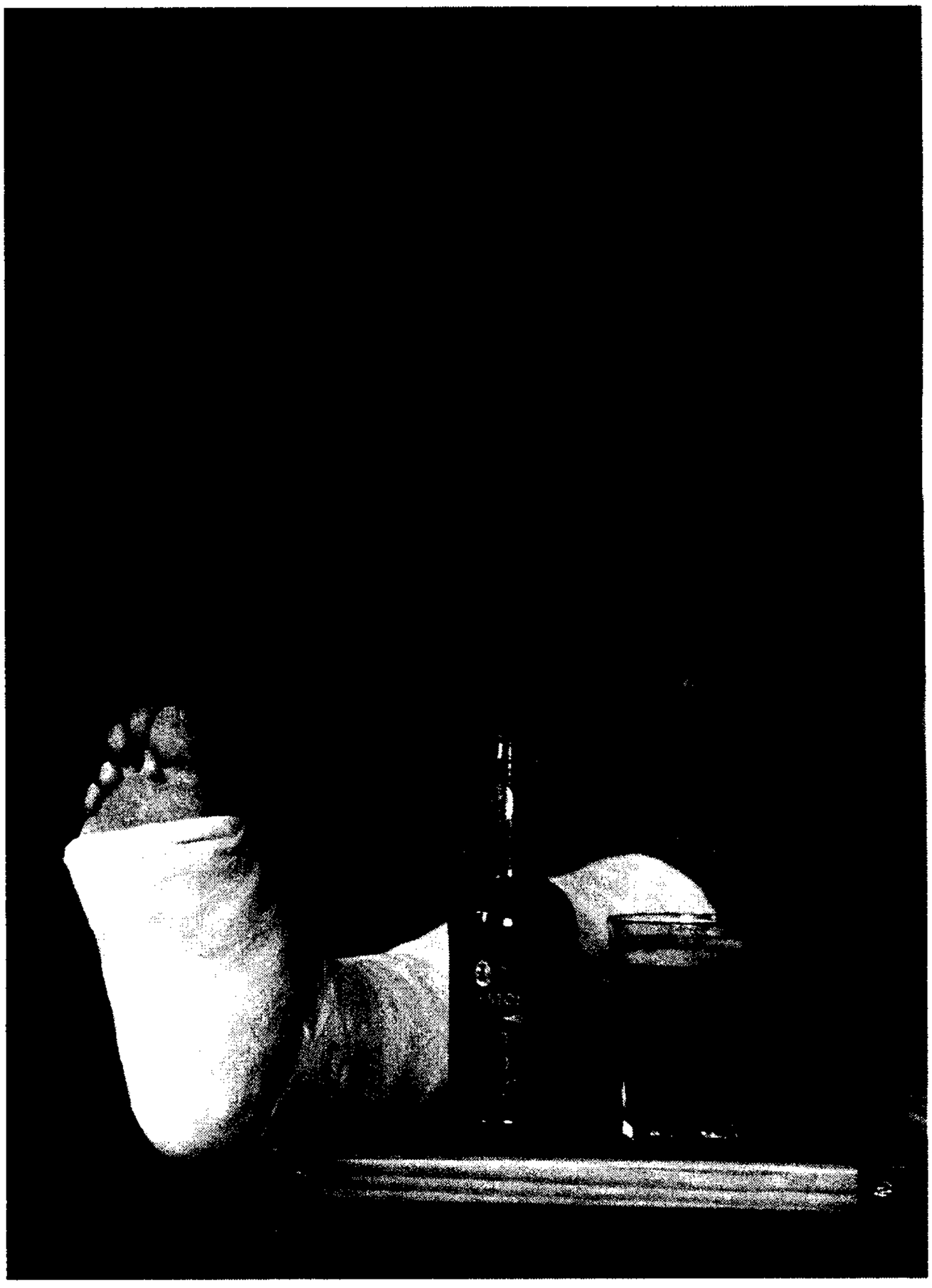
ACROSS: 5/21 Jonathan Ross 9 Ate out 10 Lacrosse 11 Beeb 12 Hanif 13 Rift 15/8 Russell Brand 17 Tropics 19 Chin 20 Diced 22 Adenauer 24 Saliva 25 Prank 26 Doctrine.

DOWN: 1 Got the push 2/18 Shit scared 3 Labour MP 4 Odds 6 A-bomb 7 Nylons 8 Backfired 12 Half drunk 14 Face-saving 16 Son-in-law 21 Ruler 23 Dope 24 Suck.


Im sick to death of people demonising us
They think 'cause you're young, You're bad
Yeah, it makes you want to kick someone's head in

"You've had a lucky break."

I told him. *"Oh, very droll."* was the DOWLY response. Well, I suppose it's hard to keep a sense of humour when your leg's half covered in plaster. *"No, really,"* I said, *"you'll never guess what I found in the off-licence."* I held up a carrier bag, gleefully. He studied it, morosely. *"I dunno, the Holy Grail? The Meaning of Life? Shergar?"* Ignoring his sarcasm I reached into the bag and produced two bottles of Theakston XB. *"You can't get to the beer,"* I exclaimed, *"but now the beer can get to you."* His eyes brightened at the sight of his favourite tipple, his tongue already licking his lips. *"Theakston XB,"* he gasped, *"in new, bottle shaped glasses!"* As we admired the ruby hue of the ale and savoured its fruity flavour I asked what he would be doing during his time of enforced confinement. *"Just following doctor's orders; get lots of rest and take plenty of liquids."* he quipped. The medicine was already working. Recovery was imminent.



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OM SAI RAM

A fitting end to the ill-fitting British suit

A suitable man to spark a men's clothing revolution

Consider this proposition. Would you rather pay the same sum for a single, off-the-peg, chain store suit cut by a computer and sold to you by a spotty boy who thinks side vents are to be found on a Lambretta scooter, or for two bespoke, custom cut, hand stitched suits, measured and sold to you by a man for whom suits are a lifetime's passion?

The British clothing chain store has a lot to fear from ***Mr. Raja M Daswani*** of Kowloon. If there were a global ambassador for men's suiting, Mr Daswani, who owns and runs Hong Kong's biggest tailoring business, would be that man. He and his family team measure and make hundreds of suits a week for discerning clients across the world.

Indeed, so successful is ***Mr. Daswani***, that - a little unnervingly as he is measuring you up - he freely admits he doesn't really need to work any more. 'My team is as experienced as I am. But I just love men's suits and I wouldn't feel right sitting at home. It's not a business. It's a mission.

'I love seeing customers walk in a really bad suit that cost them a fortune and walk out in one of our suits that's perfect in every way, made with a good heart in a superior fabric for a half or a quarter as much.'

The price of a Daswani shirt and suit are astonishing. We are talking from £19 (£25 including tax and duty) for a custom shirt and £129 (£169 including tax and duty) for a fully lined, made-to measure suit in a lightweight wool or linen, to £250 (£325 including tax and duty) for a 100 per cent wool, entirely hand finished suit in a British cloth, with every refinement from handmade button holes to knee lining. Even the most expensive suit, made in deluxe superfine wool for £1,500 (£1,950 including tax and duty), costs a third less than it would on **Savile Row**.

Raja Daswani may be based in Hong Kong, but his sartorial mission to the badly dressed and overpaying British customer brings him to the UK as often as once a month. He and his team take over hotel suites in major cities, so British customers can make an appointment and get the full Kowloon Monty.

Measurements and digital photos are taken here and emailed to Hong Kong. Often, your suit will be started on by a tailor 6,000 miles away before you've even left the hotel. You can have it couriered within a week or so, or wait for a second fitting when the Raja team hits your town again a few weeks later.

It now remains to see whether the Raja revolution, with its inspired mix of artistic flair, entrepreneurial genius and digital technology, will see the end of the off-the-peg British chain store suit. On price alone, it's a sartorial solution that will even please the Suits in accounts.

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London	**Hilton Paddington Hotel**
Dec 6-9	146 Praed Street, W2 1EE
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London	**Hilton On Park Lane**
Dec 13-16	22 Park Lane, W1K 1BE
Aberdeen	**Thistle Aberdeen Caledonian**
Dec 3-4	10-14 Union Terrace, AB10 1WE
Birmingham	**Hyatt Regency Birmingham**
Dec 2-3	2 Bridge Street, B1 2JZ
Bristol	**Bristol Marriott Hotel**
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Cardiff	**Cardiff Hilton Hotel**
Dec 12-13	Kingsway, Cardiff, CF10 3HH
Edinburgh	**George Hotel**
Dec 5-6	19-21 George Street, EH2 2PB
Exeter	**Thistle Exeter**
Dec 10-11	Queen Street, Devon EX4 3SP
Glasgow	**Hilton Glasgow**
Dec 7-8	1 William Street, G3 8HT
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Dec 4-5	Heathrow Airport, UB7 0HJ
Manchester	**Renaissance Manchester Hotel**
Nov 28-29	Blackfriars Street, M3 2EQ
Nottingham	**Crowne Plaza Nottingham**
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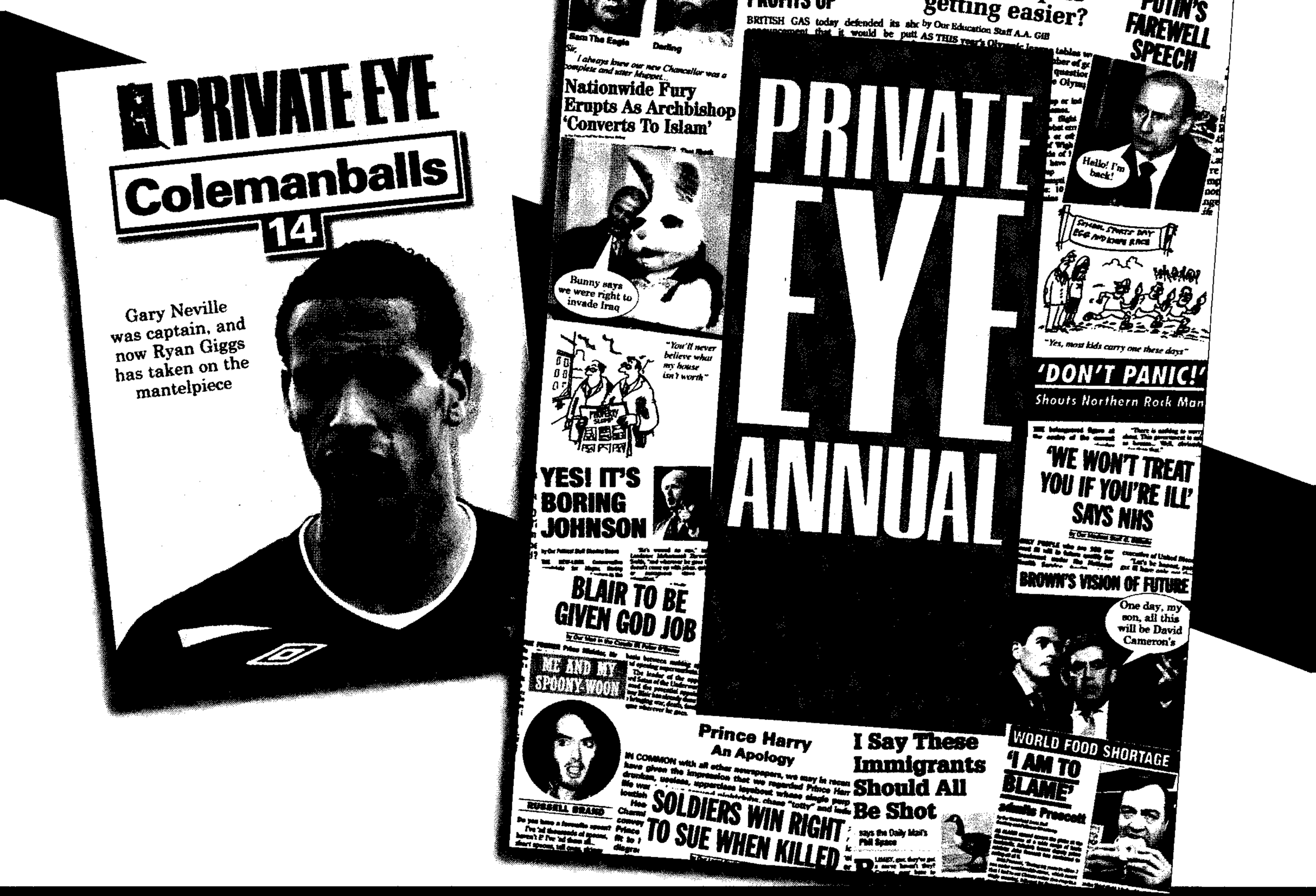
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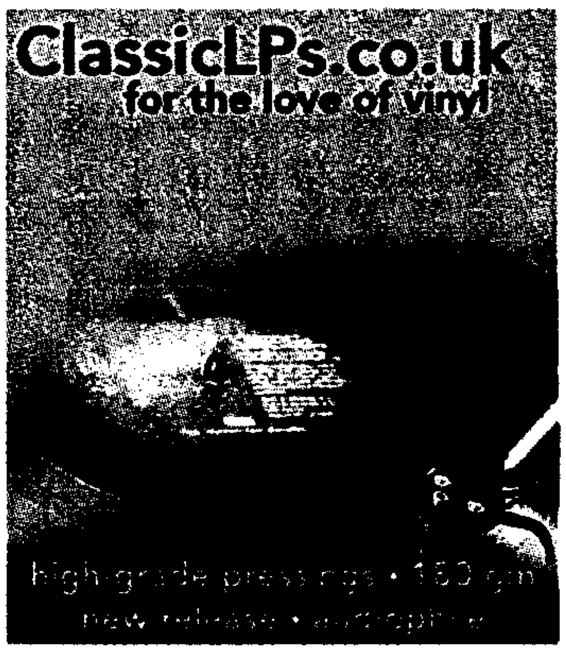

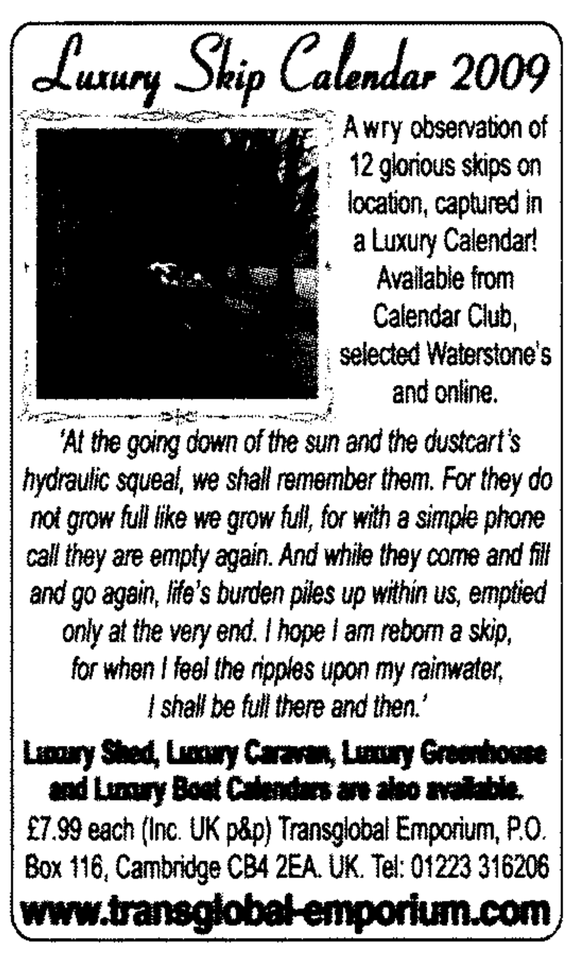
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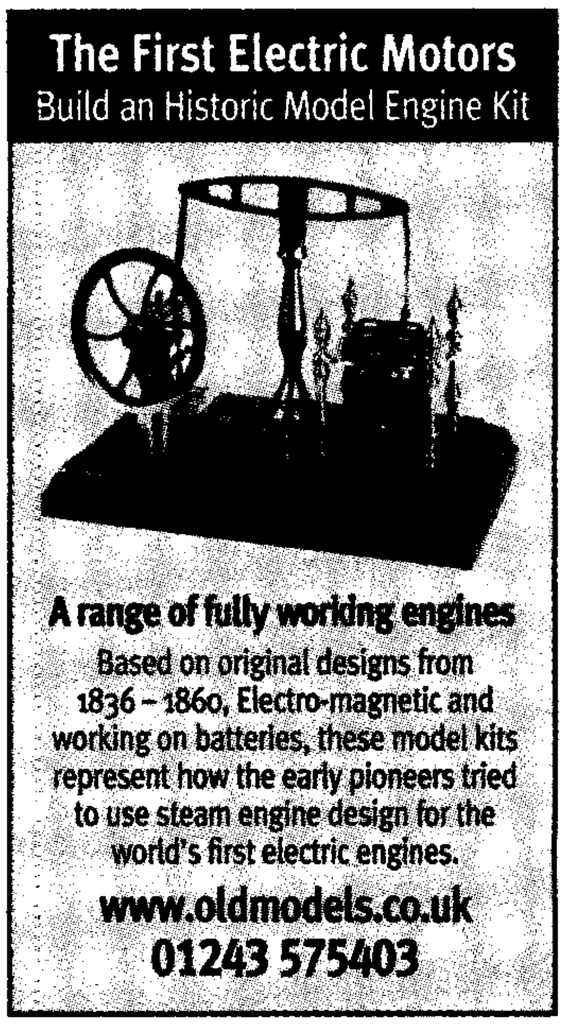
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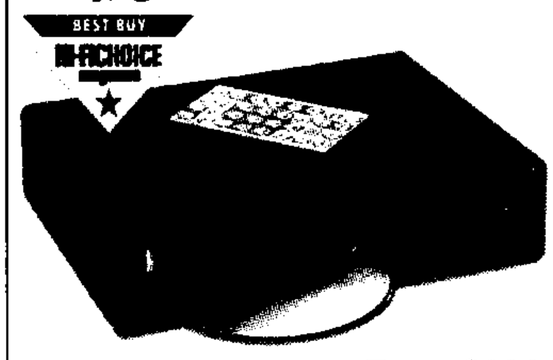

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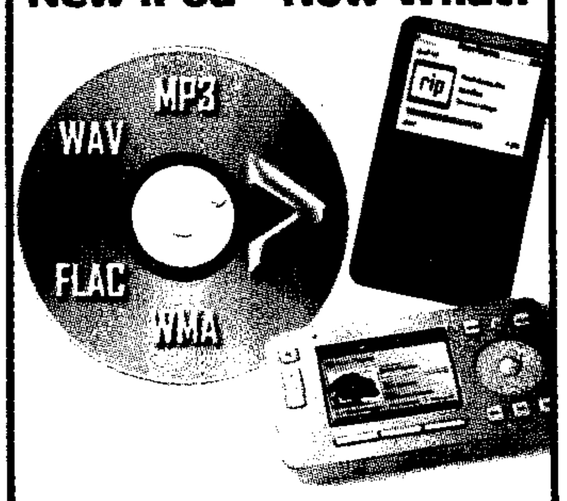

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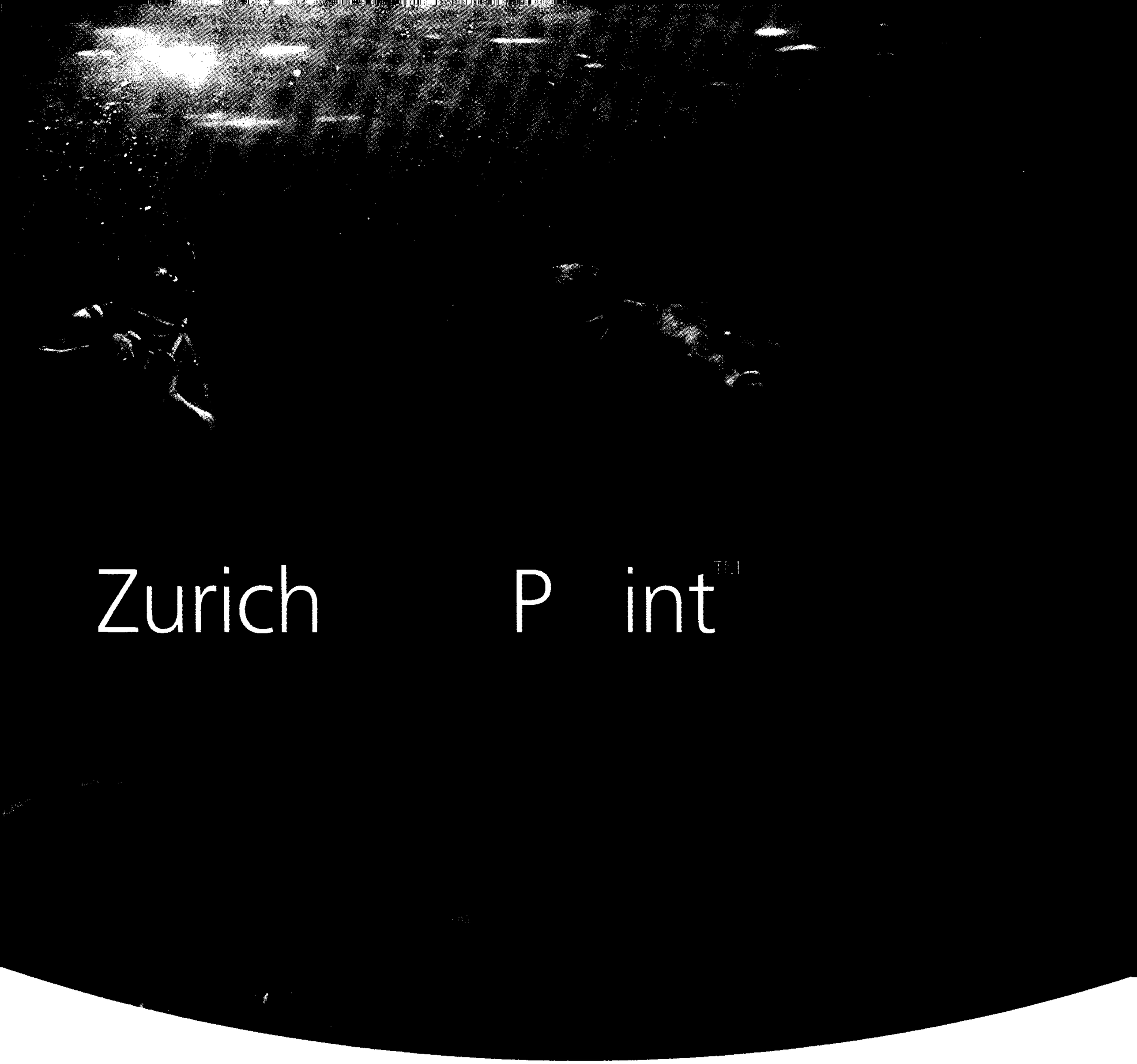

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